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(Hansard)**

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Tuesday
28 November 2017

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41^e législature

Mardi
28 novembre 2017

Speaker: Honourable Dave Levac
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Dave Levac
Greffier : Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 28 November 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 28 novembre 2017

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 177, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes, when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs; and

That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet on Thursday, December 7, 2017, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 1:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. for the purpose of public hearings on the bill; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the notice of public hearings; and

That the deadline for requests to appear be 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, December 5, 2017; and

That if not all requests can be scheduled, that the Clerk of the Committee provide the members of the subcommittee and their designates with the list of requests to appear by 11 a.m. on Tuesday, December 5, 2017; and

That the members of the subcommittee and/or their designates prioritize and return the list to the Clerk of the Committee by 1 p.m. on Tuesday, December 5, 2017; and

That the Clerk of the Committee distribute a draft copy of the agenda to the committee members and their designates by Tuesday, December 5, 2017, at 5:30 p.m. and Wednesday, December 6, 2017, at 11:30 a.m.; and

That each witness will receive up to five minutes for their presentation followed by nine minutes for questions, split evenly amongst the three recognized parties; and

That the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Thursday, December 7, 2017; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 10 a.m. on Friday, December 8, 2017; and

That the committee be authorized to meet on Monday, December 11, 2017, from 1:30 p.m. to 10 p.m., for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

On Monday, December 11, 2017, at 4:30 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Tuesday, December 12, 2017. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, one hour of debate shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That, notwithstanding standing order 81(c), the bill may be called more than once in the same sessional day; and

The votes on second and third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Madame Lalonde has moved government notice of motion number 43.

Back to Madame Lalonde.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: I believe the parliamentary assistant will be making our remarks later in the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker, and good morning. Well, here we go again. It seems the

most time that the opposition gets to speak about any bill is on closure. We're stopping debate of yet another bill. I have to say, I might as well just pull out the speech I gave twice last week, because two times they invoked closure and just stopped us from allowing debate of important bills.

I can't say this bill is more important than any other bill. Everything we look at here deserves proper attention. But this is the fall economic statement. It's quite interesting that if you actually had a copy of the finance minister's speech when he rose in this Legislature to give the fall economic statement, or if you actually had the book, published with the details of the fall economic statement in it, you would find that very, very, very little of that—all the talk—is actually in the bill. What's in the bill, on the other hand, was never in the speech for the most part.

We have 46 schedules in this bill. That's why we call it an omnibus bill. That means it's all-encompassing. It has got everything but the kitchen sink inside this bill, so it's a very important opportunity. This, along with bills such as the budget and other bills, truly deserves proper debate. And yet, here on our side in the opposition, we've only had a couple of members who were able to stand and speak about this.

Speaker, 46 individual schedules here. Virtually none of them have anything to do with the fall economic statement or with economics of any sort or with the finances of the province in any way, shape or form. Yet it's a bill brought under the fall economic statement.

The schedules that they're bringing are very important—don't get me wrong—and we support many of them. Please, let's make no mistake about that. Our party fully supports, for instance, three schedules that have to do with the Building Code Act. It's all about Elliot Lake. It's all about bringing forth the recommendations that were made from the investigation into that terrible catastrophe in Elliot Lake.

0910

There are three schedules that are sprinkled throughout this document. Those are the kinds of schedules that, of course, are truly important to the people of Ontario and that we fully support.

There are other funnier aspects of this. Schedule 1 may be one of my favourites. It's called the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, 2014. I like to just call it the St. Joseph's Health Centre act. If you remember, I stood in this Legislature and talked about the CEO of St. Joseph's Health Centre, who earns \$720,000 as the CEO but also has a part-time job down the street, here in Toronto, where he earns \$357,000 a year serving on a board, and where he earned \$1.5 million in stock as well. There are several other boards that he's on, but I picked on this particular one, the \$357,000-a-year one.

Finally, the Liberals have realized the error of their ways and now have the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, where "a minister"—in this particular case, it's really all about the health minister, and I'm reading out of the schedule now—"to make a particular

specified decision" related to executive compensation. That means the minister can now intervene when somebody is earning \$720,000 a year and has a part-time job at \$357,000. It goes on to say "... that, in the opinion of the minister, is appropriate...."

So the minister can now set the pay for CEOs of a hospital. That's really what this is all about: that any minister here can be involved in the compensation of any CEO or any "designated executives" of the broader public sector.

That is in here. You didn't hear about that in the speech; you don't read about it in the book. But, certainly, it was a way for them to slip this in. Speaker, that's one of my favourites in here. As I say, I call it the St. Joseph's Health Centre act.

There is another one here that's a real dilly, and this is why they're invoking closure. They do not want us standing here talking about how heinous it is that they have dumped 46 schedules into the fall economic statement that, for the most part, have nothing to do with the fall economic statement, or don't have anything to do with economics or finance.

Here's another one. Speaker, this one really gets me. This is schedule 13. It's called the Election Finances Act.

If you remember, Speaker, when the Liberals got caught in their election financing scandal—this is the cash-for-access and the quid pro quo, and the "I'll pass a bill and you hold a fundraiser for me," one of those things. They got caught. We understand that. They got caught. They decided to have this sweeping set of changes in election finances that swung the pendulum far over to the other side and banned MPPs from going to a \$10 spaghetti dinner at the Davedi Club in North Bay if it's a fundraiser—those types of things. They rushed it. They got caught one day and rushed in a bill, and it was horribly designed. They brought their own amendments to it because it was so poorly done. They passed it in a hurry. They invoked closure—we can't even talk about it—and rammed it through without any real thoughts, without really consulting with people such as the elections officer here in Ontario.

Anyway, we've got this bill rammed through. Weeks later, they're bringing in an historic bill to create two new ridings in northern Ontario. Here we are, with a chance to make history. I've spoken in this Legislature before about how they bungled that by disrespecting the Mushkegowuk Council, who asked for that name not to be used, but that's another story for another day; I've spoken for hours on that.

But in that bill, they slammed in election finances changes. This is only weeks after their bill got through, the one that they rushed through. They have jammed in what I like to call the Caroline Mulroney act, because the dates that they put in this, restricting the Election Finances Act, would prohibit Caroline Mulroney, our PC candidate—

Mr. Steve Clark: Star candidate.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: —thank you—from fundraising. That's why I called it that. They specifically picked the dates to affect her.

All of a sudden, now, in the fall economic statement, schedule 13 is yet another Election Finances Act change. They changed the start date yet again, Speaker, back to when the nomination meeting is called. But not only are they ramming in election finances, their third round of changes now—I can't quite figure out yet who this is going to nail, but it goes back; it's retroactive to July 1, 2017. They figured out that one of our candidates has an opportunity to continue fundraising under the rules, so they have gone ahead and they are trying to retroactively, now, change it.

This is why we have closure, Speaker. They do not want us here speaking about the mess that they got themselves into, the fact that they got caught again doing something untoward. They got caught in a campaign finance scandal where they passed laws, had people involved and had fundraisers to the benefit only of the Liberal Party. They got caught doing that and, now, here we are again. They are ramming something else through. We are not really sure who this is going to hurt but it's going to hurt somebody and it will be on this side, that's for sure. We saw that a couple of weeks ago when they made sweeping changes.

This is why we're here today, Speaker. They do not want us to have any more opportunity to talk about this scheme of theirs, but they are up to something and it's happening so fast that we just can't quite nail why they need that retroactive to July 1 and who it will affect. That's the kind of thing that they are ramming in here.

This goes on and on and on, Speaker. Again, there are very, very good changes that they are making. It's inappropriate to have them in a fall economic statement, of course, with nothing to do with the fall economic statement whatsoever, but nonetheless it's some very important legislation that we support.

Speaker, I can tell you there are things like the Child, Youth and Family Services Act that are going to be changed. There are things in the City of Toronto Act that are going to be changed. There are things in the Education Act that are very important—nothing whatsoever to do with the fall economic statement, nothing to do with the finances of Ontario. Nonetheless, schedule 12 is an example: It is a very, very important schedule that we would support. There's a demonstration school known as the Centre Jules-Léger, and that is going to give them a new, not-for-profit called the Centre Jules-Léger Consortium. That is an important piece of legislation. It should be a stand-alone, Speaker. It should be all on its own.

There are so many pieces of legislation that should be on their own. We've got schedule 14, the English and Wabigoon Rivers Remediation Funding Act. This is all about Grassy Narrows. They have slipped that into this bill and then invoked closure so we can't talk about it anymore because, again, they got caught. They continue to say that the Liberals and the Premier didn't know about all of the paperwork that was done on this. It has been out there for 10 years, Speaker. It defies credibility that they can say, "We didn't know about that so we're going to act on it right away." Right away? It has been 10 years.

That is why they are invoking closure. They do not want us to have any opportunity to speak about their failings at Grassy Narrows. They do not want to have these as separate bills. They have rammed all of these things together. It defies any logic whatsoever.

0920

Speaker, on that note, I would say to you that I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice to split Bill 177, and I have tabled this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Fedeli has brought forward a unanimous consent motion. Is it the—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I heard a no. Further debate: back to Mr. Fedeli.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Sadly, Speaker, this goes to my point. We want to divide this bill so that we can actually speak at length about all of these various pieces.

So here's another one: the Green Energy Act of 2009. Believe it or not, Speaker, they have slipped two sections of energy into this fall economic statement. Here we go again. Why? Because this has been a disaster in Ontario. We have professional organizations such as the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers coming out and illustrating to the Liberals as well as the people of Ontario that because of the flaws in the Green Energy Act—it's the way this government pushed it onto the people of Ontario. They took something as important as green energy and bungled that so badly that it cost us over 300,000 manufacturing jobs across Ontario, because they've created amongst the highest energy rates in all of North America. So they don't want us standing here talking about that. They would rather us not have an opportunity to debate schedule 17 on the Green Energy Act.

We have the Auditor General, who tells us about the billions of dollars that have been wasted on their version of the Green Energy Act and why the way they did it bungled it. If I recall, Speaker, when I first got elected in 2011, only a month later, the former Auditor General had a press conference downstairs. I went and sat in there—I was energy critic at the time—and he shocked the people of Ontario with several facts. First of all, he talked about why the Green Energy Act, the way it is, was hurting the people of Ontario so badly, and he talked about how damaging it was going to be in the future. He was so accurate, it's uncanny. If you go back and look at his speech and his press conference of 2011 and look at six years later, November, you will find that he was eerily close on the dollars that he warned Ontario it was going to cost.

He told us why. He told us that they passed the Green Energy Act with no business plan, and the way they forced wind and solar on the people of Ontario was going to harm us. He told us that back then. That's why they have slipped these changes into the energy file, because they don't want us here today talking about this.

They also have another part of this, schedule 33, that will cap the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund, the PBGF. I have a letter here to read into the record from Bob

Farmer of the Canadian Federation of Pensioners, and he's talking about the announced changes to the Pension Benefits Act.

He says, "Pensioners will be hurt unless the government makes sure that the guarantee fund will cover any unfunded liabilities of any defined benefit pension plan when it winds up involuntarily. The PBGF coverage cap should be eliminated. This can be done at no cost to taxpayers, while still giving big savings to employers."

Now, I recall, Speaker, only a few weeks ago when the Canadian Federation of Pensioners came to Queen's Park and explained this to many MPPs. I hope they explained their strategy to the Liberal Party as well, because he continues on to say, "Surely all parties can agree that helping employers, and at the same time assuring pensioners that the pensions they have earned are finally protected in Ontario, makes sense."

Bob Farmer continues by saying, "Thank you again for your interest in this, and for trying to help bring security to Ontario's defined benefit pensioners."

Well, Bob and others, sadly, that is not what the province of Ontario's government, the Liberal government, wants to do. They are set on ramming this bill through. They've invoked closure. That means we don't get to talk about it here any longer. We don't get to talk about those pension benefits.

We don't get to talk about the Green Energy Act and OSPE, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, who just told us, on November 22, six days ago, "Ontario lost between \$732 million and \$1.25 billion over the past two years selling surplus clean electricity outside the province."

You see, that's why they slipped this in. They don't want us to have a chance to talk about this. They want to just let it slide through.

They've slipped in the high-occupancy toll lanes again. This continues the Liberal government's war on the car, and the opportunity that, wherever they can get a buck, they'll go after it. They no longer call people "drivers"; they call them "revenue tools." That's what we really are to the Liberal government.

Think about the taxes that have gone up under this government, whether it's the HST or the employee health tax. Drivers' licences and registration fees have gone up \$503 million in four years. That's what this government is all about. They treat the people as revenue tools. They don't treat the people of Ontario with respect. That's why they've invoked closure, and that translates into not allowing us any opportunity to have a meaningful debate on the fall economic statement or these 46 schedules.

I thank you for the opportunity to stand in this Legislature and speak to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents of Windsor West. I was hoping to speak to Bill 177, the Stronger, Fairer Ontario Act, also known as budget measures, but as the member before me pointed out, this is the second time in seven days that I

am standing here talking about the fact that the government doesn't want to talk about a bill they brought forward.

You've got to wonder—I know my constituents wonder—about the validity of the legislation the government is bringing forward when the government doesn't even want to talk about it. If they're bringing proposed legislation forward and they really feel that it's good legislation, it's strong legislation and it's really going to help the people of this province, you would think they would want to talk about it as much as they possibly can. We all know they go out and trumpet what they see as successes, but when it comes to talking about something like Bill 177, they don't want to talk about it. They don't want to debate it. They don't want to hear from the members on this side of the House. They don't even want to hear from their own members and the constituents they represent.

When they move to time-allocate and shut down debate, clearly they're saying to their own constituents, to the government's constituents, "We don't want to hear from you." And that's really unfortunate, because what they could be doing is bringing forward legislation that has some really good pieces in it that are actually going to help the people of Ontario. But instead, they chose to bring forward a bill that isn't about what it says it's about, and then shut down debate.

I want to point out that Bill 177 addresses 46 schedules and that 16 agencies are affected. But as my colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo pointed out in debate last week, almost half of the 46 schedules have almost nothing to do with the province's financial systems—nothing. Yet they call it the Stronger, Fairer Ontario Act (Budget Measures). Bill 177 is a budget measures act. It should be dealing primarily with budgetary items, but it doesn't, which is probably why the government doesn't want to talk about it.

In fact, there are some aspects of this bill that have nothing to do with budgetary measures, like recognizing the city of Ottawa as having two official languages. What does that have to do with the financial situation in the province of Ontario? What does that actually have to do with the finances or the budget of the province of Ontario? It's great that Ottawa has two official languages. That's something one of their members could have got up and mentioned in a member's statement. It doesn't have to be worked into a budget bill.

0930

There are also some strange provisions in schedule 38, which deals with the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act. I have to tell you, Speaker, at first I was thrilled to hear that the government had actually worked something for people with developmental or intellectual disabilities into a financial bill, into a budget bill. Then I saw that one of the three provisions in schedule 38 was simply correcting a mistake in the French-language section of the bill, and I'm still wondering what that has to do with the budgetary policy.

It's just, frankly, another omnibus bill. They've pulled in everything but the kitchen sink—although, who knows, the kitchen sink may be in here. They've thrown it all into one bill, and they're trying to push it through and tell the people of the province that it's all about the finances and the budget of the province when, really, it has nothing to do with it.

Speaker, going back to the fact that at least they mentioned the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, it sparks another conversation. We are talking about a budgetary bill, and yet we have a province, we have a government, that has not increased the base funding for agencies that actually support persons with developmental disabilities. They haven't increased funding in almost a decade. They've brought forward bills since then, talking about labour reform. They've listened to New Democrats and the push to make sure that people are making a decent minimum wage. Yet they have done nothing to actually support these agencies in a financial manner to make sure that they are still able to service people with developmental disabilities.

There is nothing in this bill that will see more funding flow to these organizations so that they can continue to provide the supports and services that they do. There's nothing in this bill for the thousands of people who are on a wait-list for supportive housing—nothing. There's nothing in this bill that puts more money into the system—a system, again, that has not seen base funding increases. Nothing has gone into this bill to talk about the thousands of people languishing on a wait-list to receive Passport funding so they can actually go out and get services to help those with developmental or intellectual disabilities.

I probably have more notes than I needed for the time that I have, but I want to go over their schedule for committee. Last week, when I was speaking to time allocation, or a closure motion, a member from the government side had said that it needs to go to committee, and I talked about the farce that committee is. It's a farce because the Liberal government gives people very little notice to get their names in to be able to present to committee. They often only do committee here in Toronto, which can be a burden for people who live down my way, down in the far south of Ontario. It can be a burden for the people up north to get here in the timelines that the government has prescribed.

I want to read out what their plans are for committee, just to make that point. I should point out that people usually have five minutes to present, so if you're someone coming from the north and you have to take multiple modes of transportation to get here—sometimes it can take 15 hours and sometimes the weather isn't the greatest—you're going to have five minutes to talk to the committee, and each representative from each party is going to have about three minutes to ask you a question, and then your time is done. The government doesn't want to travel the committee, though, to talk to people.

Late last night, the government shared with us the timeline for the legislation. The government has allocated

one day of hearings and one day of clause-by-clause study. We have 46 schedules impacting 16 agencies, and the government is only giving the committee and stakeholders two days to hammer out all the details. Then they decided on one hour of debate at third reading—one hour of debate. They're shutting down debate right now on the bill, because they don't want to talk about it. Then they're rushing through committee, and when it comes back to third reading, they want to give it only one hour for debate.

It's very clear they don't want to hear from the opposition members. They don't want to hear from our constituents; they don't even want to hear from their own constituents. They have constituents who have concerns about this as well. They have constituents who want to be heard, and yet they don't want to give them the opportunity to do that. It's completely unacceptable, and it completely undermines our democracy.

We in this House, 107 of us—think about that: Out of all of the people in the province, there are 107 people as of right now—next election, that number will go up a bit—who have the opportunity and, frankly, the honour to do what we do, to come into this place to represent our constituents and bring forward the voices of those people we represent.

The government is very clear in their stance that they don't want to hear from my constituents. They don't want to hear from the constituents from Oshawa. They don't want to hear from any of the constituents represented by the Conservative members, and even more shameful, the people who voted to send the Liberal members here—those members don't want to hear from their constituents, either. They don't want to actually bring their voices to the Legislature. They just want to toe the party line and do what they're told to do over there. They don't want to rock the boat. They don't want to bring forward the voices of their constituents, and that is shameful.

Again, it is an incredible honour to be one of 107 people who have the opportunity to do what we do here. They are wasting that opportunity on the other side of the House by not engaging in a fulsome debate and by not giving the people that they represent the opportunity to come to committee and actually have an opportunity to be heard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a sad day again in the Legislature, where we're here on a Tuesday morning to deal with yet another closure motion by this government—a very anti-democratic motion.

As some of the other speakers have said this morning, this is a very comprehensive bill. Bill 177 is pretty thick. I don't know that I'd look at a young person today and say it was the size of a phone book, because a young person might not know what a phone book is.

I actually had to go to the table and say, "Which omnibus bill can I get a copy of this morning?" Because I don't know if you can see it, but when you do the wide

shot today, you will see a stack of these huge bills on the Clerks' table.

As people have said this morning, it's a huge bill. We've referred to it as an omnibus bill: 46 schedules and a number of bill consolidations.

Like the member for Nipissing, my seatmate, talked about this morning, many of the things that were discussed in the fall economic statement are not included here, and there are many, many things that are new. This is something that this government loves to do; they love to throw a number of unrelated items—Speaker, you recall that just a week ago we were here debating another closure motion, on the cannabis bill, where we had school bus safety included in that bill. It's pretty rich for a government to do this.

I know that my colleague Mr. Fedeli did this this morning, and I think it's only prudent: The bill should be split. I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice to split Bill 177.

9040

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): This is the second time that this unanimous consent motion has been brought forward. The House has already decided on it.

Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: Mr. Speaker, I think you're familiar with standing orders 100 to 107 dealing with Committee of the Whole House. I would ask unanimous consent for us to revert to Committee of the Whole House so we can deal with this bill and split Bill 177.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Clark is seeking unanimous consent for the House to revert back to Committee of the Whole.

I heard a no. Further debate.

Mr. Steve Clark: You know, it's pretty rich. Speaker, this government is afraid to talk about this bill. It's afraid to even talk about this closure motion. This is how this government operates. People can go today to Facebook; they can go on Facebook today and look at a purchased ad for the fall economic statement. This government is willing to spend taxpayers' dollars to promote the fall economic statement, but they're too gutless—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: We're proud of it.

Mr. Steve Clark: You may be proud of it, but you're pretty damned gutless to not be able to stand up today and defend it. I'm sick of your—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Steve Clark: Withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continue, please.

Mr. Steve Clark: You know what? I'm going to give the Liberals a little history lesson, and I'm going to quote the dean of the Legislature, the member for St. Catharines, Jim Bradley.

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: You can heckle all you want. I'm going to quote Jim Bradley, December 11, 2001. This is a quote from Jim Bradley:

"This is indeed an interesting bill, but what's even more interesting right now is the time allocation motion that faces us. For the people who are watching this perhaps on their television sets at home, I should clarify that. That is the choking off of debate, the ending of debate or the government allocating how much time there shall be for the debate on a piece of legislation."

His quote goes on: "We are operating in this Legislative Assembly at this time almost exclusively on what are called time allocation motions. That's most unfortunate, because it's what you would call anti-democratic. Is this the first government that ever used a time allocation motion or a closure motion? No. But this government has consistently used these motions to pass legislation through this House even after this government imposed upon the Legislature drastic changes to the procedural rules of this House to grease the skids for legislation that it deems appropriate for the province."

Listen again to this quote from Jim Bradley: "The best way to deal with legislation"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I'd just like to remind the member and all members that we don't refer to members by name. We refer to them by their riding.

Please continue.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for acknowledging that point.

I'll do another quote from the member for St. Catharines, the chief government whip: "The best way to deal with legislation is to have the government sitting most of the year so that it can receive careful analysis and debate in this House and in committees and, in fact, in committees that travel across the province to get meaningful input. We do not have that."

That's a quote. You know what? We sure don't have that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We could put today's date on that.

Mr. Steve Clark: We sure don't have that. You're absolutely correct, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

As was discussed earlier by the member from Windsor West—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: If the member for Barrie would like to join in the debate, you've got 40 minutes. You can easily stand up and give your comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They don't want to debate.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order.

Mr. Steve Clark: They love to heckle but they don't want to debate.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Really?

Mr. Steve Clark: Yes, really.

The member for Windsor West did talk about how undemocratic this government is when it comes to this closure motion. In fact, in the motion, government motion 43, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs is only authorized to meet on Thurs-

day, December 7, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 and from 1:30 to 6 p.m. for the purposes of public hearings on the bill. You've got one day for an omnibus bill that deals with 46 different schedules, that is about an inch, an inch and a half thick, that has many items in that bill that should not be in that bill. They should be stand-alone bills that get their own careful analysis and debate in this government.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They're out spending money on advertising.

Mr. Steve Clark: You know what? That's right. The Facebook ads are running now, the government ads are running now, to promote this bill, yet this government is silent. They don't want to debate it. They don't want it in committee. They don't want to hear from people.

You know what, Speaker? My party loves to hear from people. We've been talking to people for months. We've had hundreds of volunteers, thousands of ideas. And you know what? If this government doesn't want to listen to people, I'll give them a guarantee. I'll give them, actually, the People's Guarantee, because we will listen to them, and we will ensure that those Ontarians are being listened to.

We are looking at a government that is for the insiders and not the people. You know what, Speaker? That's going to change.

Again, I'm going to ask for unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice to split this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd just like to remind the member that unanimous consent has already been dealt with and it was declined. I heard a no.

Again, back to the member for further debate.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, I'm going to quote Jim Bradley again—the member for St. Catharines. Sorry.

November 24, 1993: "I'm concerned about the closure motions because I think they limit legitimate debate. I recognize that a government ultimately might have the opportunity to close down a debate that's been going on a very long period of time. But as I've indicated to the House in days gone by, the purpose of these debates is to canvass public opinion, to make the public aware of what is happening."

The member goes on to say, "All of us have experienced the situation where we have encountered our constituents and they've said, 'What is this particular bill all about?' or 'How did this bill get passed and I didn't know anything about it?' They are legitimate questions. One of the reasons is that the bills tend to get passed very rapidly in this House."

Speaker, you've shut me down. This bill should not be an omnibus bill. It should be a separate bill. We should have legitimate debate in this House, and we should have a government that actually listens to people, not the insiders.

I think we're going to have to wait six months for that government, because this government has laid their path forward. They're going to have closure debate. They're going to stifle public opinion. They're going to shut down all opposing voices. They're going to rack up a lot of Facebook ads and a lot of television ads to try to

promote themselves. People have seen through that. They've seen enough of this movie. They want it to end.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to stand and speak to Bill 177, Stronger, Fairer Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2017.

Speaker, when we have a bill that has 46 schedules, affecting 16 agencies, with all sorts of nuggets of good, and poison pills, and all sorts of stuff in there, how come my first chance to get up and speak to this is in time allocation? That's something that I find hard to explain to my community members, friends and family when they watch the Legislature, to explain that debate isn't really debate; it's whatever the government wants it to be. It's a race. It's a race to do the most damage they possibly can with the least amount of consultation, full stop.

Here we are, with the opportunity again to debate this bill, but it's not really debate. I only have 10 minutes. It's time allocation. It is "ram it through." With time allocation, that is not just about limiting the amount of time we discuss it in the House, and how limited debate is. Also, Speaker—and this won't come as a surprise to you, because this is not your first rodeo—it's a chance for the government to shut down the time at committee.

Interjections.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I would invite the members of the House to stop talking so that I can hear myself. Thanks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

Interjection.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: This is debate.

Speaker, the government has already limited debate, and now he's going to talk through my chance. If the member opposite has something riveting to say, I encourage him to stand up during his rotation. And if I could remember his riding—oh, Northumberland—Quinte West—I'd call him out. There; I did.

Anyway, as I was saying, it isn't just a chance for the government to limit debate; it's also a chance for them to shut down the time in committee.

0950

Mr. Michael Mantha: That's what you call a zinger.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: If I have to call out one of my own members, I will.

Interjections.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Shh. No, I'm telling you.

The time in committee they have so limited that it's December 7 from 9 until 10:15 a.m.—that's a whole hour and a quarter—and then again from 1:30 to 6 p.m., and that's for the purpose of public hearings. That's it. That's it for a 46-schedule bill affecting 16 agencies—the budget measures act. Then, flash forward—you've got such limited time: five minutes per presentation.

By the way, to the folks of Ontario who won't be able to get in on the in-person consultation: The deadline for written submissions is 6 o'clock on Thursday, December 7, so feel free to let the Clerks know. Feel free to let the

government know that you have thoughts on this bill, even though they don't want you to and even though they certainly aren't going to invite it.

Then, once we get to third reading, when we're back here to again have that fulsome debate—just kidding—we have one hour, one hour in total to debate this bill. This is stuff and nonsense. That's what this is. This government is such a sham; it really is. Debate—no, it's not. It's pathetic.

However, we are here. I have a bit of time, and I'm not just going to give them heck, although Lord knows it feels cathartic.

Speaker, in my previous role, I was critic for pensions, and I really appreciated that role. I got to spend a lot of time in this Legislature, especially because the ORPP was on the table and on the horizon. We had a lot of time in this Legislature to talk about the importance of retirement security, and that's a conversation that I'm awfully glad that we had. I just wish that the government had paid attention. We had hours and hours and hours to talk about the ORPP and PRPPs, and to talk about the importance of retirement security, and this government—it's like it never happened.

Of the 46 schedules, I'm just going to pick one. I'm going to focus on section 33, which amends the Pension Benefits Act. This is the act that regulates the Ontario pension system, and it's supposed to protect the retirement security of all Ontarians with a pension. However, pensioners are still at risk, as we know, in this province. Nortel, Algoma steel and now Sears are all-too-real examples of why we need strong pension regulations that protect pensioners but put pensioners first.

You would think that this is something we could all agree on, Mr. Speaker, and it should be something that transcends partisanship with supports across this chamber, but alas, it is not. We should be doing everything in our power to fight for pensioners. We should be making it harder to underfund pension plans and run them in solvency positions, but this bill is doing the opposite. It actually makes it easier for pension plans to fall into deficit positions.

I'm going to basically explain what I mean by that, for the folks at home. Right now, plans are required to be funded at 100% solvency rate. In the event of a pension plan being wound up, at the end of that journey, they're supposed to be funded at 100%, so that pensioners are covered. But now the government is like, "Oh, 100%—that's a lot," and it turns out that a lot of our pension plans are not actually reaching that level of funding. The average is about—I don't know—80% or 85%, I think the Canadian Federation of Pensioners told me.

So they're not meeting 100% solvency. Right now, many of them are achieving about 85%. The government is like, "Well, guys, we're going to move the goal line. We're going to tell companies that now they only need to fund plans to 85% of solvency." They're dropping that maximum goal line. It was 100%, and now it's going to be 85%. So what is going to happen? Are you now going to have plans that say, "Oh, 85%—that's really high.

Let's just go with 70%"? Is that what's going to happen? Is that the average, or are some of these companies able to get away with 70% funding? What happens to the pensioners? They're that much further unprotected.

This government is so excited. They are probably saying, "We've given ourselves some wiggle room so that we'll be able to stand up and say, '100% of our pensions are funded to the new low.'" Good for you. Could you imagine that on the outside of an envelope that they're going to mail to folks? Sorry. I'm still a little sore about all their hydro advertising that they pretend isn't advertising, but anyway.

So they're moving the goal line to 85% of solvency. There are already too many plans that are underfunded when the target is 100%, so if you're going to give them another 15% of wiggle room—it's so irresponsible of them. This is a government that stands up and talks about retirement security and that they're onside, they're on board. Malarkey. Am I allowed to say "malarkey" or is that unparliamentary?

Interjection: Yes.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Okay. I withdraw if it's unparliamentary. But anyway—stuff and nonsense.

This is going to lead to more plans being underfunded. It's increasing the liability on pensioners, and it means that when a company goes under and when a plan is wound up, it will be exponentially more likely that the plan is funded at a lower rate and that the pensioners end up taking a bigger haircut. It's unbelievable that this government thinks it's a good idea, although nothing surprises me with them anymore—so irresponsible. Nothing surprises me.

Pensioners are terrified. They absolutely should be. Our pensioners deserve so much better, across all of our communities. It's our job to ensure that they're protected. This government is trying to put them 15% more at risk, which is absurd.

Speaker, how on earth am I already out of time? I get going. Okay.

Another piece of it was my motion last year. I don't know if you remember, Speaker, but it passed unanimously in the House. It was a private member's motion which called on the federal government to prioritize pensioners during bankruptcy proceedings. It was a federal initiative but a provincial motion. We said that we as a Legislature, a proud Legislative Assembly of Ontario, call on the feds to do this. They were onside. Then we've watched this play out over the last year, and we see that now Sears—originally, we had seen what happened to employees at Nortel when the company collapsed in 2009. We have been watching it happen before our eyes with the employees of US Steel, and now, unfortunately, we're seeing it happen with Sears employees and Sears pensioners. You know what, Speaker? Had this government put their money where their mouth is a year ago when they said, "Yes, we support this motion; yes, we are going to call on the feds"—had they done that, we might not be here. Well, we would be here, but the Sears employees, the Sears pensioners, might not be facing the

uncertain future that they now are. Again, shame on this government. But that is, again, par for the course.

The PBGF, which is the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund—first of all, I'd like to say that the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund is something that not everyone is eligible for. The Unifor workers in Oshawa, the GM workers in Oshawa, don't qualify for this. The thing is, the government could have used schedule 33 to talk about incentivizing employers to bring their plans, bring their employees, under this protection, but they didn't because they don't really care. They just like to talk. But we have been calling for the PBGF to be enhanced for years. Unfortunately, it's not to the level that we would like to see. It doesn't cover everyone. It's a step in the right direction, but it's not enough.

I'm getting distracted—because here's the thing, Mr. Speaker: I've got three letters from folks in my community that I wanted to read into the record. That would take me another 20 minutes, and I'm not going to do that to any of us. But I'll give you the gist of them.

Malcolm Muldowney says, "Ms. French, I hope I can count on you to help secure the pension livelihood of almost two million Ontario citizens and their families by supporting the CFP pension proposal?" The proposal "would cost the government nothing and would not increase or require any new taxes. It is actually a win, win, win...."

He says—I'll just read the beginning: "I am one of the almost two million Ontario citizens who depend on a privately funded defined benefit pension plan.

"I am extremely concerned about the proposed pension changes proposed by the Ontario finance minister, Mr. Sousa." So am I, Mr. Speaker, so am I. But I digress. "His proposed changes are formalized in Bill 177, schedule 33. The proposal will unjustly benefit the pension plan sponsor at the cost of my family's livelihood.

"My pension is de facto deferred earned wages as part of my contract with my former employer. I have already earned it. My pension was freely offered by my employer and in fact was a mandatory part of my employment contract.

1000

"I realize the government needs to address certain business concerns with this bill. In that respect, I fully support the proposal by the Canadian Federation of Pensioners (CFP), which is based on actuarial studies and would improve the existing Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund."

Speaker, this is a group—folks are writing in and they're getting into the nitty-gritty of it. They're talking about it being based on actuarial studies. I wish the government could defend their policies and say that their ideas were based on actuarial studies. I wish this government understood what due diligence meant and that they took it seriously that they have a responsibility to Ontarians, to all Ontarians: to pensioners, to workers in the province, to families. Instead of just talking the talk, I wish that they would actually take that responsibility seriously.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am going to wrap it up. Shame on this government. I want so much more from them for the people of Ontario, and I wish that they would sit up and bother to do their job.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Time allocation is a very selective thing this government decides to do, when they impose it on—I have to say that with almost every bill that comes before this House, we anticipate that they will bring forward a time allocation motion. How is that really part of the democratic process, when you limit the time that people are allowed to discuss a bill and to bring forward the views of their constituents in a very meaningful and thoughtful way? You are told a couple of days before, or the morning of, that you have now been time-allocated and you have been shut down and your voice, your constituents' voice, is not important.

We're going to rush this bill through. As one of the members has said, it's one day of committee, one day for stakeholders, workers, health care providers and insurance brokers. I alluded to that last week, that there are a couple of schedules here for RIBO, for insurance brokers.

Everything under the sun is in this bill, yet they are only given the opportunity—they're time-allocating committee. They are time-allocating the public, and the contributions the public have on this bill. One day in committee: How on earth can any government—a responsible government, a proactive government, a government that has operationalized a bill—understand that that is enough public contributions in order to make decisions to amend and create legislation that will actually work for people?

This government doesn't even get it. It is a bunch of malarkey that we go through this process over and over again. As one of my colleagues said, it's a pile of malarkey. The malarkey just has layers upon layers of malarkey. We can't even dig through that malarkey to make this government understand that time-allocating every piece of legislation is wrong.

Perhaps in some cases, there may be a way of looking at it, because on this side of the House—sometimes, when you have legislation, it isn't written in stone. When you are debating it, that's when you have the opportunity to open your mind to different concepts, to open your mind to amendments, to open your mind to suggestions and to stories that you have heard from your constituents—and I'm sure that these members have heard stories.

I go back to the time allocation piece. When we talk about democracy, the college strike and the legislation that was brought forward—"Unanimous consent; let's just check off the box, and we don't need debate on this. Let's get the teachers back to work. Let's make sure students are in class." Everybody wanted that. That's the piece that is confusing here. Everybody wanted that, absolutely. I think every member wanted that to happen, but when you start a process of unanimous consent, and you bring it to this House and you ask people to sign off

carte blanche without reading legislation, that is egregious. That is not democracy.

We need to debate bills coming to this House. And—

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's right.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Exactly. And then, the spin on this was, "The NDP is blocking legislation." Come on. At least be upfront with the process and say, "The NDP doesn't agree with unanimous consent. They want to debate the bill, and we're going to have to go through the process. We're going to actually allow democracy to unfold. We're going to allow people to have contributions to what we are proposing."

I'll tell you what happened in my riding. On Friday I decided to go to Fanshawe College. It's a wonderful facility. There are great teachers there, great faculty, and the students in London highly regard the programs that are developed there. I decided to go visit the college and talk to the students and find out how they are really feeling about coming back to school, about the process of what happened—five weeks being off and what they did with their lives. The outcome of those talks was that students are so resilient. They were, for the most part, optimistic, but cautiously apprehensive. I'll explain what that means.

They were optimistic because when they came back on the Tuesday, they said that the faculty and the teachers were supportive. They were providing accommodations. They had a plan for how to get these students through this compressed semester, so the students felt relieved. They were working together with teachers to come up with a solution that would have outcomes that are positive for them.

Also, what they felt was that they need to see it unfold. How is that going to help, the support and accommodations? Are they able to make those things work for them? You can have all the support in the world sometimes, and you can't get to that end goal because it's unrealistic. I've committed to go back to the college and hear students out and find out what's happening just before their exams—the last day of school is on the 22nd of December—just to find out what's going on and how those things translated practically, those supports and accommodations. Did they work for students?

Here we are: We've passed legislation; we think the problem is solved. Everybody is back to work, students are in class; we wash our hands of this. But no, Speaker, it is a process. We are responsible. We are responsible for having this legislation. The Liberals are responsible for having this legislation. Putting teachers back in class is forcing them back to work. But what's their responsibility to make sure that what the legislation has accomplished is actually going to work for the people that they said it's going to work for, which is students? They need to be accountable for that. I hope every one of their members is going back and talking to students and getting feedback.

Students weren't upset with teachers. They understood what the teachers were standing up for. I think people were confused about why this Liberal government

wouldn't step in earlier and do something—the last midnight hour.

I see some members are nodding their heads, so I'm really appreciative that they are paying attention to what I'm saying. I hope that they'll contribute to this debate.

Getting back to time allocation—time allocation is not a way to get to where you need. A carrot and a stick: Time allocation is a stick. If you want something from someone, I think you should offer them a carrot and they're probably going to get better results. It's kind of like the college strike: Teachers went back, and what did they do? They're offering carrots. They're coming up with supportive ideas. They're coming up with accommodations.

When this government brings a bill, that's what they should be doing. They should be working with this side of the House in order to make things better for Ontarians, and they are not. Because when you have time allocation over and over again, what you're doing is you're saying, "We're not going to listen to you. You don't have any good ideas." Even when we have really productive ideas that are going to revolutionize some legislation, at committee they gang up together, because they have a majority, and they vote it down. They vote it down.

I have to say, some of the shenanigans and the malarky that happens in this House have really sometimes surprised me, and still surprise me. I'm here, in good faith, wanting to make a difference and debate legislation to the fullest extent that we have an opportunity to. You don't need to debate ongoing—if things have been said and ideas have been brought forward, because that's when the committee process really can actually enhance what we talk about. But when you shut down debate, bill after bill—I said to my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin, "Would you like to speak on this time allocation bill?" He said, "I've already spoken to it." I said, "Oh, no, no, no. You are getting confused."

We're all getting confused, because every time we turn around, it's another time allocation. You can't speak to time allocation twice. He spoke to time allocation just last week—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Different bill.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: —on a different bill, and he's like, "I already spoke to it."

This is how bad it is when you think everything you're speaking to is time allocation and you can't talk to a new bill. That's how wrong this whole process is when you talk about time allocation. There might be times when you want to pull that lever when there is time allocation required, but this is not one of these times. Bill 177 is not one of these times.

I have Len, from London, who is asking me about schedule 30, because it's under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. He's concerned about the powers in there with respect to inspectors and employers having to report hazards in the workplace. One of the pieces in there says—and I have to refer to my BlackBerry. Can I do that, Speaker? Can I ask permission? No, I can't. Okay.

But there's a piece in there that he is very concerned about, and it needs to be debated in this House, not just

for 40 minutes, but it needs to be debated by each individual to understand what's going on in that inspection piece. It doesn't apply if an employer owns the workplace, this particular provision in here. So he is concerned about that.

Len has emailed me and said, "Teresa, what's happening with this?" I can't tell him. I can't say, "You know what? I can't hold the government accountable because I'm talking about time allocation and nobody is speaking to it." Nobody is speaking to it on this side of the House.

How ridiculous. You call time allocation. How arrogant, actually. You call time allocation and you don't even have the nerve, the responsibility—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Or the capacity.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The guts.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: —the capacity, the guts, I'm hearing in the background, to stand up and speak to time allocation. They just sit there, silent. It's really distasteful, I'll be honest, to have interactions with other human beings you work with like that.

Speaker, I know that the government has an agenda. They want to push everything through and look like they're working so hard. But we can do that hard work together. We can do that hard work where people aren't suing this government for every piece of legislation that comes forward. There are many, many things that they have put through that affect people adversely, and not everybody has the means to take this government to task. They were sued for the privatization of Hydro One. Now there's another lawsuit coming up for the college strike legislation.

Goodness gracious, do you not think that maybe if you debated these things, you might get a perspective where you could close the loophole of lawsuits?

Maybe we can come up with legislation on this side of the House closing loopholes for this government where it protects them from lawsuits. Maybe that's the legislation we need to debate.

Mr. Michael Mantha: They'd still find a way to mess that one up.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: They'd still find a way to mess that one up.

My time is running out. I do appreciate being allowed to speak in this House. I hope this government and their leaders who determine the agenda for this Legislature will, in the future, take a second look at this, because really, it's not working. You're not getting a good response when you keep holding up that stick.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is now 10:15. This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It is absolutely my pleasure to welcome to the House the chair of the Ontario dairy farmers, Ralph Dietrich. He's from the amazing riding of Huron-Bruce; specifically, Mildmay, Ontario.

Hon. Jeff Leal: This morning I'd like to welcome members from both Ontario Pork and the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. I'd like to take the time to thank these groups for their continued advocacy, hard work and dedication to grow Ontario's prosperous dairy and pork sectors.

I'd also like to welcome members of the House to join in the receptions this evening. Ontario Pork will be hosting a reception from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. in room 228; Dairy Farmers of Ontario will be hosting a reception from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. in the legislative dining room.

From the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, I'd like to welcome a director from the great riding of Peterborough, Will Vanderhorst.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Today is Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs lobby day. Hopefully people are making time to speak with some of them. It's kind of an umbrella for many organizations.

Barbara Bank is here, vice-chair, CIJA Toronto council; Jonathan Bradshaw is here; Kim Coulter, president and CEO, JVS Toronto; Viola Dessanti, community capacity building from UJA; Jay Fallis the LA for Paul Miller; Shelly Feld, CIJA Toronto; Arnold Foss, director of Holocaust survivor services funds and community relations; Rachel Friedman, CIJA; Gary Gladstone from my riding of Thornhill from Reena; Karen Goldenberg, CIJA Toronto council; Gail Gould, executive director, Bernard Betel Centre; Roslyn Harris, Circle of Care; Lia Kisel, JIAS Toronto; Adir Krafman, CIJA; Maria Lindgren, Bernard Betel; Sharon List, Jewish Family and Child; Madi Murariu, associate director and Ontario government relations from CIJA; Berl Nadler, chair at CIJA; Cindy Osherooff, CIJA; Josh Otis, project director, collective impact initiatives—just a few more, Mr. Speaker; I don't want to leave anybody out—Sandi Pelly, director, capacity building for social services; Brian Prousky from Jewish Family and Child; Sarah Scriven from CIJA; Noah Shack, interim vice-president; Nancy Singer, executive director at Kehilla; Donna Starkman Shiff from CIJA; Allison Steinberg, director of development, JVS; Carole Sterling, CIJA; and one last person, Judit Schönwal from my volunteer team. Thanks for being here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That was my first filibuster of introductions.

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pleasure to welcome our page captain for today from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, Zunairah Gangat, and the family: aunt Zakiyya Gangat; uncle Azhar Gangat; brother Muhammed Gangat; and cousins Zakiyya and Amenah Gangat. They're in the public gallery with us this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's my pleasure to introduce Peter Apostolopoulos, a board member of the Ontario Film Authority, and his executive assistant, Melanie Loiselle, here for FilmOntario's lobby day.

I want to welcome everyone who's here for FilmOntario lobby day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Leeds-Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks, Speaker. I want to introduce to you and through you to members of the

Legislative Assembly a constituent and friend from my riding of Leeds–Grenville who's here with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. I'd like to welcome our local director Henry Oosterhof. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Mr. John Vanthof: On behalf of the NDP, I'd like to welcome Ontario Pork here today and my former colleagues from Dairy Farmers of Ontario. You're very welcome and thanks for supporting our province.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Today is a Hunter day. I would like to welcome my big brother Maurice Hunter and my niece, Jayda Hunter, who is a star volleyball player with Durham Attack. Later this morning, my nephew, Isaac Hunter, will be here with his teacher, Ms. Mathur from Rountree Public School's grade 5. Please welcome them.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to welcome the Dairy Farmers of Ontario to Queen's Park, particularly Murray Sherk from the great riding of Oxford. I appreciated that you came in today to meet with me early this morning to tell me all the good work the dairy farmers are doing for the province of Ontario. Thank you for coming to Queen's Park.

Ms. Soo Wong: I want all of us in the chamber to welcome a very special guest: Arun Vengadaramanan, a nine-year-old published author and poet. No one else in this chamber can say that. Arun, welcome to Queen's Park. He's here with his parents, Kengatharaiyer and Kokila Vengadaramanan, and his younger brother, Athavan.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I wish to welcome Ontario Pork, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and my constituent Albert Fledderus.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to welcome Sandi Blancher, Sara Labelle and Joel Usher as well as the members of the Ontario Health Coalition who are here in the gallery and making their way in. They are here to protest section 9 of Bill 160. Welcome to Queen's Park, ladies.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Please join me in welcoming my good friend Gary Gladstone, sitting in the member's gallery, as well as Dr. Monika Yazdanian, the director of the McMaster University campus linked accelerator, and Dr. Ehsan Mirdamadi.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I wish to welcome Ian Harrop, who has been an outstanding leader on the board of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario for the last 12 years and continues to advise me. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to welcome four members of FilmOntario who are here to lobby today: Hilary Goldstein, Wayne Goodchild, Sue Milling and Michaela Sanielevici. I met with them this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Grant Crack: It's my pleasure to rise today in order to introduce Mr. Bart Rijke from the great riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. He's here today with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. He was first elected to the board in 2016 and represents the Ottawa–Carleton area as well, including my county. Also, a warm welcome to Graham Lloyd, GM and CEO, and to all members of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario who are here. As the minister

mentioned, at 5 p.m. tonight in the dining room, a Dairy Farmers of Ontario reception—welcome.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to introduce a constituent of mine, Paul Vis, who is a board member of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my honour to acknowledge and recognize members of Grassy Narrows First Nation who are here with us today: Chief Simon Fobister, Bill Fobister Sr., Alana Pahpasay, Peter Luce, Adrienne Telford, David Sone and Judy Da Silva.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to welcome Sid Atkinson from Roseneath in the beautiful riding of Northumberland. He's with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. Welcome.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I had a great meeting this morning with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario: Patrice Dubé, Bart Rijke, Will Vanderhorst and, of course, from the great riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Nick Thurler. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I also want to welcome all the members and my friends from FilmOntario, especially Neishaw Ali, who's the president of Spin VFX, a special effects company, and a constituent. Welcome to our world.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Henry Wydeven, who is a constituent from Perth–Wellington and is on the Dairy Farmers of Ontario board.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure to introduce grade 5s and 6s from my great riding of Davenport visiting here from St. Nicholas of Bari Catholic School with their teacher, Rose Aiello. Welcome to Queen's Park, St. Nicholas of Bari.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? Last call for introductions.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin–Caledon on a point of order.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I seek unanimous consent to fly the heritage and freedom flag at the courtesy flagpole at the Ontario Legislature while senior government officials are in Vietnam.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin–Caledon is seeking unanimous consent to fly this particular flag. Do we agree? I heard a no.

1040

I do want to remind members that there was a discussion with the House leaders on the protocol and the process that we were going to apply for flying flags that are not national, that are not country flags, and I hope that the House leaders will see to that issue and ensure that the House is not used, if it can at all help it. I appreciate your co-operation on that issue.

WEARING OF PINS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Status of Women on a point of order.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that members be permitted to wear rose pins to recognize 16 days of activism against violence against women.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister is seeking unanimous consent for the members to wear the rose pins in recognition of 16 days of activism against violence against women. Do we agree to wear the pins? Agreed. Carried.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the finance minister.

Ontario PC leader Patrick Brown was in Scarborough this morning. He was talking to middle-class families. He was telling them about the People's Guarantee, the guarantee that a PC government will cut taxes for the middle class by 22.5% and reduce taxes for the first income tax bracket by 10%, giving a break to those who need it most.

A PC government will cut taxes and make life more affordable for middle-class families. Why won't this Liberal government?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Not one single Ontarian will receive the tax cuts that this member is advocating for or advertising. Even before the election has started, they are making promises that they can't keep. I would argue: Step down now.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Minister of Finance. The People's Guarantee offers a reasonable response to years of government mismanagement. Kevin Page, the former Parliamentary Budget Officer, had this to say: "The fiscal estimates underlying the Ontario PC platform have been deemed reasonable by the non-partisan Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy, University of Ottawa." Kevin Milligan, professor of economics at the Vancouver School of Economics, says, "In my view, a government with firm attention to cost management can achieve savings in the range proposed" in the PC platform.

Which one of these esteemed, respected Canadian economists does the Liberal government disagree with today?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank goodness, Mr. Speaker, that Kevin Page was there to keep an eye on these folks and use notes at the end of their glossy magazine to tell the truth. The truth is that there's \$12 billion in cuts under their plan. The truth is that the effective marginal tax rate that they're proposing is not true. It can't happen. Kevin Page insisted upon that in order to provide his name.

I would ask the member opposite: What is it that you're going to cut and how much is the carbon tax that's triple that of cap-and-trade going to cost families on their gas bills?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Final supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the minister. I must say the Liberal spin is embarrassing. John Michael McGrath pointed out the facts: The Liberals are lying about a hidden—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

The member will withdraw.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If it happens again, I'm going to warn the person who chooses to use that language.

Finish.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, we will also increase the Ontario sales tax credit by \$100 per adult and \$100 per child in order to bring real relief to Ontario's low-income residents. That's money back in their pockets and that's money that will combat the unaffordable policies created by this government. The people who need it most will get it.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister not agree that lower- and middle-income families finally deserve a break?

Hon. Charles Sousa: All right, let's be clear: Kevin Page illustrated for the rest of the public to acknowledge that the 22.5% that you're proposing is false. It's completely untrue and cannot be achieved for the people of Ontario, based on what they've said.

The member opposite has just cited our fiscal plan, and he's building his proposals and his assumptions on our fiscal plan.

Furthermore, what they've done just does not add up. They're cutting revenues, they're cutting expenses, but they're increasing the carbon tax substantively. They cannot be trusted. They're making guarantees that they cannot fulfill. Step down, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You're telling the Speaker to step down?

Hon. Charles Sousa: You know what I meant. I'll correct my record.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You are talking to me.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Can I correct my record now, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No.

With an honest attempt to try to see if the members could take care of themselves in decorum—one round is finished—you cannot. We are in warnings, and I will use them immediately. You've had your fun for one round. It's over.

New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Minister of Finance. The Toronto Star editorial headline read that the People's Guarantee "Deserves a Serious Look from Voters." That's because it offers real solutions to make life affordable for middle-class families. It deserves a look because the People's Guarantee offers real, much-

needed and much-deserved tax cuts: 22.5% for middle-class families.

But instead of giving it a serious look, instead of acknowledging that this is the path Ontario needs to bring real relief to families, Liberal members choose to repeat nonsense. They know it's nonsense, and I hope they quickly realize how foolish they actually sound.

Families deserve a lot better from you.

Mr. Speaker, why won't the Liberals support tax cuts to middle-class families?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Well, let's quote a few other things, Mr. Speaker, using the numbers presented in that glossy magazine, reaffirmed by Kevin Page as incoherent—and, frankly, false, because they're not going to be able to achieve 22% tax cuts.

Furthermore, the *Globe and Mail* states this: "The problem with the 'People's Guarantee' is that it's a bit too clever, fiscally risky and economically incoherent." They are not delivering a tax cut to the people of Ontario. In fact, they're going to deliver a net tax increase with the carbon tax that they're providing, which is twice as much as what we are incurring today. The tax cut—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe—Grey is warned.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The question is, what are you cutting, in what amounts? What hospitals are you cutting? Are you going to cut pharmacare for people under 25? Are you going to cut tuition for those who are getting it free? Are you cutting health care and education—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Etobicoke North is warned.

You have one wrap-up sentence.

1050

Hon. Charles Sousa: Their plan is all about cuts and deficits, Mr. Speaker. This member has fought for balanced budgets—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the minister: I can tell the minister that what we'll be cutting are Liberal MPPs. That's what our—

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Steve Paikin, one of the most respected journalists, has this to say about Kevin Page's review: "One Little Sentence Sets the Progressive Conservative Platform Apart.... It's a thumbs-up from one of the most respected economic analysts in the country."

Under the PC plan, middle- and lower-income families benefit the most. Only our party will put money back in their pockets. That's money to combat the unaffordable policies created by this government—money for people who need the help most.

Mr. Speaker, why is this government attacking our numbers? Is it because they don't want to bring tax cuts to middle-class families?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, this is the same party that is not supporting Ontario families, the same party that is rolling back the minimum wage, the same party that didn't support our plan to provide for more hospitals, nurses and education. It's the same family that voted against free university tuition, the same family that voted against free prescriptions for those under 25. It's the same family that—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Same family? Same family?

Hon. Charles Sousa: It's the same party that—

Mr. John Yakabuski: We're a party. We are a family, Charles.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke is warned.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Kevin Page, in his notes, made it clear that their proposal, their plan, doesn't add up, that they can't be trusted because what they're proposing is a tax that will not be achieved by any Ontarian. They're misleading the province. They should—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member will withdraw.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Elgin—Middlesex—London is warned.

Finish.

Hon. Charles Sousa: A finance critic should take every precaution to be fiscally prudent and build contingencies into their plan. They have none in this plan, and their guarantee will illustrate the fact that they should step down.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Obviously the minister is reading a different book, because Kevin Page calls our plan "reasonable." That's something he could never call their plan.

Our People's Guarantee offers a 22.5% tax cut to middle-class families. Our plan offers an increase to the Ontario Sales Tax Credit of \$100. Meanwhile, the Liberal government demands higher taxes and higher fees. That's the way it always is, Speaker. They can't afford to pay their Liberal insiders any other way. But we think it's time to put the people first, not the insiders.

Mr. Speaker, I ask one more time: Why won't this government support tax cuts for middle-class families?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we have taken steps to support middle-class families. That party voted against every one of those very measures, and instead, they're pretending—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I can do this all day because I feel fit. The member from Niagara West—Glanbrook is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: They're pretending to provide tax cuts when in fact they're not. In fact, their plan is

both a social and fiscal deficit to the province of Ontario. There is no prudence. They're going into deficit. They're putting in assumptions for \$12 billion that they're not able to achieve. It's reckless, irresponsible—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We'll do this all day long. The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is warned.

New question.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Members of the Ontario Health Coalition are joining us today in the galleries, and I want to thank them for being here.

Year after year, we've seen this Liberal government, and the Conservatives before them, cutting public hospitals and pushing health care services into private clinics. Now this Liberal government wants to open the doors even wider and roll out the red carpet for even more for-profit private clinics. Buried deep inside Bill 160, the Premier's Harper-style health omnibus bill, is schedule 9, a plan to clear the way for new, private clinics and make it harder for ordinary families to get the health care they need.

Why is this government, like the Conservatives before them, intent on privatizing even more of our health care system?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, I welcome the members of the Ontario Health Coalition who are here today.

We've been, over the past number of days, working closely with the Ontario Health Coalition and other stakeholders for a common agenda and a common goal. One of the things that this act, if passed, will actually provide, through schedule 9, is that it will prevent any further private hospitals in this province. We currently have six private hospitals that were grandfathered into legislation from 1931 by a previous government, not our own. What this legislation does is that it requires that those six entities transition out into a new regulatory and oversight regime, and no further private hospitals will be allowed in this province.

Mr. Speaker, it is an important measure. I want to thank the Ontario Health Coalition for proposing additional language for amendments that we're going to introduce to make that crystal clear to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The truth is that the Ontario Health Coalition says, "This new act is essentially a new private hospitals and clinics act." And do you know what? More privatization is absolutely the last thing we need in our health care system in the province of Ontario.

Thanks to the Liberals and the Conservatives, there are over 1,000 for-profit private clinics in Ontario today

taking scarce health care dollars out of our public system and handing that money right over to private corporate profits. The Premier's health care privatization bill allows private clinics to apply to open their doors at any time they wish, and by repealing the Private Hospitals Act, this omnibus bill actually removes the 44-year-old ban on future private hospitals in Ontario.

Why is this government opening its arms to more private clinics when private clinics only make it harder for Ontario families to get the health care they need?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, under this government, and hopefully all future governments, there will be no more private hospitals in this province. There are six that exist, which were grandfathered into legislation many, many decades ago, as the leader of the third party rightly points out.

We are making it crystal clear that we are not going to allow any further private hospitals. We've got legislation that will require that. We're repealing an act that allows for private hospitals. We're requiring all of the existing six to transition into, say, long-term care or others, but with enhanced oversight, accountability and transparency that they currently don't have. We're working with the Ontario Health Coalition and other stakeholders to add additional language to make it crystal clear to all of us that we not only share the same goal, but that we're going to attain that goal of no more private hospitals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The first thing this government did after getting elected last election was to turn around and privatize Hydro One without a mandate. Now, on their way out of office, with no mandate, they're trying to privatize more of our public hospital services. Speaker, we will not let them get away with it.

The National Union of Public and General Employees says this bill will "make it easier for private hospitals and clinics to expand, and more difficult for the minister to stop them." It allows anyone to apply to open a private clinic at any time. It changes the name of private clinics to "community health facilities," which would be laughable if it wasn't so offensive to not-for-profit community health care. And despite what the minister says, the health privatization bill that they've introduced removes the 44-year-old ban on future private hospitals in Ontario.

Why is this government doing exactly what we expect from the Conservatives and privatizing the health care people rely on?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Once again, the leader of the third party has it completely wrong. There are six private hospitals in this province. I was surprised to learn that when I became health minister. It was grandfathered in by a government not our own, many decades ago.

We're taking measures. The current regime through the Private Hospitals Act is almost 100 years old. It doesn't provide for the requisite accountability, transparency and oversight that we would expect of all our health care facilities in this province, so we're adding that oversight and that transparency and that accountability. We're making it crystal clear that this government will not

tolerate or allow any additional or future private hospitals. It will be crystal clear.

Again, I want to thank the Ontario Health Coalition and other partners, because over the past days—perhaps the NDP hasn't been listening—we've been working together to make that crystal clear that that will be the case.

1100

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. While the Liberals are acting like Conservatives when it comes to opening the door to private hospitals, the Conservatives announced this weekend that their platform is going to be acting like Liberals when it comes to hydro policy. Conservatives are going to keep the \$40-billion Liberal hydro borrowing scheme that will see people's hydro bills skyrocket after the election. This plan is no good for anyone except bankers. Clearly, the Conservatives and the Liberals see eye to eye when it comes to forcing Ontario families and businesses to pay for their pre-election political schemes.

Why won't this Liberal government, once and for all, admit that hydro should be a public good, controlled by the people of Ontario, for the benefit of every single family and every single business in this province, and reverse the sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm pleased to rise and once again talk about Hydro One and what it's been doing to actually help its customers, and the work we have done as a government to ensure that we have reduced rates for Hydro One customers by between 40% and 50%.

That's something that these families in northern and rural communities are seeing, day in and day out, off of their bills, and that's because of this government acting. The opposition voted against that. They voted against helping families see a reduction of 40% to 50% on their bills. They voted against helping First Nations individuals living on-reserve see their delivery charge removed. They voted against the Ontario Electricity Support Program and the enhancements to help low-income individuals.

We've ensured that we've helped families and businesses right across the province. They have cleaner air to breathe. They have a better system to work at, and now, thanks to this government, a more affordable system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The privatized Hydro One has already applied for numerous rate increases. They've invested in foreign coal-burning companies instead of Ontario families. Now they want the ability to force people who are struggling with their bills to install prepay meters. In short, the company is looking out for its own profits, not Ontario families or Ontario businesses.

In fact, in Hydro One's proposal to install these prepay meters, they say people who are at high risk for non-payment are going to be the targets. Clearly, the plan is to

make money from families who are struggling and use it to line the pockets of already wealthy shareholders.

Can the Acting Premier explain to Ontarians why the privatized Hydro One's priority is boosting its profits and not helping families and businesses keep the lights on?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Hydro One has come forward with the voluntary winter reconnection program to make sure they can help families who were struggling. They then work with those families to make sure they can be reconnected and come up with a payment plan. They're working hard on being a better company for families.

When it comes to prepaid meters, since last week everyone is well aware that this is an opt-in program, if it is even allowed by the OEB. The Ontario Energy Board is the entity that is quasi-judicial, will review the program, will review the application and then make a decision based off of its review.

The OEB, in the past, has turned down rate applications, has turned down other types of applications like this, because they have the best interests of ratepayers at heart. That is their mandate. We're going to continue to allow the OEB to do what they need to do when it comes to ensuring they protect ratepayers. On this side of the House, this government will continue to act to protect ratepayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The minister continues to call this plan "voluntary" or "opt-in." Nowhere in the Hydro One proposal to install prepay meters can you find the word "voluntary." What you will find is this exact quote, Speaker: "With a prepaid meter, electricity is paid up front. Once the prepaid amount is used up, power is cut off until the customer is able to load the meter with more credits."

Right there, in black and white, the privatized Hydro One says it plans to use prepay meters to get around the rule in Ontario banning wintertime hydro disconnections. Instead of working with people who are struggling, Hydro One will let their meters simply run out.

Can the Acting Premier explain again why she thinks a privatized Hydro One is in the best interests of Ontarians?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: There are a lot of assumptions being made by the third party when it comes to two paragraphs in a 2,000-page document, when the company has even—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: The company is on the record saying that this is not the intention of those two paragraphs. The intention is to give people choice, something that that party has never done when it comes to the electricity sector. Even their pie-in-the-sky plan doesn't offer choice and even excluded looking at helping low-income individuals.

But not us. We made sure we brought forward the OESP, which actually helps low-income individuals. We brought forward a 25% reduction for all families right across the province. The Hydro One R1 and R2 reduction, according to the fair hydro plan, can see a 40% to 50% reduction. That is action helping people.

TAXATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday, my leader, Patrick Brown, joined me in Nepean. He was there to stress our People's Guarantee. I introduced him to a 12-year-old girl, Anna, and her family. Her family works hard as new Canadians, but because of Liberal policies, they pay more and they are consistently getting less. That's why the People's Guarantee will help them and why they endorsed it. It will help families like Anna's by reducing middle-class income taxes by 22.5%, it will help middle-class families by refunding up to 75% of their child care expenses, and it will help hockey players like Anna by restoring the fitness tax credit.

After 14 years of Liberal taxes, families like Anna's deserve a break. They deserve a break to get ahead. Mr. Speaker, why has the Liberal government for 14 years forgotten families like Anna's?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we've been hearing a lot about this 22.5% tax cut for middle-income Ontarians. It's their number one promise. The only problem is, if you're promising people a 22.5% cut, you think you're going to get a 22.5% cut.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You mean a 25% hydro reduction?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean–Carleton is warned.

Finish.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, not one single person in the province of Ontario will get a 22.5% income tax cut—not one single person.

You're telling the public one thing and you're actually doing something entirely different. It's time for your party to take a good, long look at this. It's simply inaccurate. It is wrong. I'm not going to use the words the Speaker won't let me use—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I stand, you sit.

Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: What's inaccurate and full of baloney is that answer that that minister just provided for this government.

You don't have to take our word for it; you can take Kevin Page's word for it. It's on the back of that document.

You can also take Kevin Milligan, professor of economics at the Vancouver School of Economics. He had this to say—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell is warned. The

Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services is warned.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That's all right, Speaker. I know why they're nervous: I was at the Grey Cup on Sunday with Patrick Brown. People were coming up to tell us how much they loved our platform. We were at hockey rinks all across Ottawa. They loved the People's Guarantee.

But let's go back to Kevin Milligan. He said, "This proposal has two main advantages. First, it delivers the largest benefit"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I wouldn't risk it.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I guess this platform cuts really deep, Speaker. But let's try to get back to what Kevin Milligan has said—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. There are two sides to this issue. When the member says things that she knows will inflame, I wouldn't go there.

Finish your question, please.

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Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm just trying to ask a question. "First, it delivers the largest benefit to—"

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not happy with that. That almost challenges the Chair.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I wasn't trying to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not asking for any comments. That's it. It's over.

Please ask your question.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: "First, it delivers the largest benefit to lower- and middle-income families who most need help with child care expenses. Second, it supports flexibility for those families who need part-time care, shift work or irregular care arrangements." He goes on to say, "The Ontario PC child care proposal offers improved, flexible benefits for all Ontario families."

Why won't you endorse our plan?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think I know the answer, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay is warned.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I can assure you, the members opposite and the people of Ontario that we will never endorse a plan that contains \$12 billion in cuts, and we will never endorse a plan that pretends to be something that it isn't.

Let me repeat: Not one single person in this province—

Mr. Lorne Coe: Call the election.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Like I said, I can do this all day. The member from Whitby–Oshawa is warned.

Finish.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Not one single person will see a 22.5% decrease in their income taxes. What the PCs are talking about and what they're actually proposing to do are two totally different things.

MERCURY POISONING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Acting Premier: The chief of the Grassy Narrows First Nation is in the Legislature today asking that the province contribute to building and operating a health facility for the people of Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong First Nations. The province has known for decades that mercury is present on the paper mill site and that mercury contamination was not decreasing in the English-Wabigoon river system.

Last September, ministers in the Liberal government were informed that mercury contamination continued on the site even though the Premier continued to say that any cleanup would cause more risk to the population. As many as 90% of the people in these communities show signs of mercury contamination and have been abandoned to their fate.

Will the Premier today commit to making funds available for the establishment and operation of a mercury care health facility in this community now?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for that question.

We are deeply concerned about the challenges faced by Grassy Narrows and, indeed, Whitedog nation in that area.

I can tell you that I have had, along with my federal counterparts, various ministers and technical people, two meetings with my federal colleagues involving the chiefs. I can tell you that tomorrow we are having a meeting here in Toronto. I am meeting with my federal counterpart, Minister Philpott, and with the chief of Grassy Narrows and with the chief of Whitedog. On the agenda tomorrow is this issue of what to do about Grassy Narrows. I have received the request for the treatment facility. This is a matter that will be discussed tomorrow between the province, the federal government and the First Nations concerned.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Acting Premier: Pain is a constant reality for people with mercury poisoning. Lack of muscle control, tunnel vision and other symptoms make life very difficult. The Japanese long ago provided special health care for mercury-poisoned people in the city of Minamata.

Does the Acting Premier feel no sense of responsibility for dragging out this problem? What does the Acting Premier have to say to the generations, the young people, the elders and the leaders of the Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong people left with the painful and debilitating legacy of mercury poisoning of their river and lands?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister?

Hon. David Zimmer: As I said in my first answer, we are deeply concerned about this issue. That is why this meeting has been arranged tomorrow with the provincial government and the federal government; the federal cabinet minister is coming down, Minister Philpott, who

is responsible for the operations side of the federal ministry. I know that this subject matter that the member opposite has raised is on the agenda tomorrow.

We will consider what we hear from the federal government, the First Nations and the province. But we are working towards a solution for this.

In the meantime, I should say that we have provided \$5.2 million for some remediation workup preliminary to tackling the actual problem. We've also set aside \$85 million. That's in a fund that is co-managed by the province and the First Nation to address these issues.

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour la ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport. Speaker, as you will know, Ontario is a leader in film and television production across North America. Last year, in fact, was the third straight record-breaking year for film and TV production in Ontario. Our government, of course, understands how strong the competition is across North America to attract film shoots, both foreign and domestic, and to provide an attractive location for local productions. That's why we're budgeting \$481 million this year for tax credits related to this.

Ontario also has many other advantages as a great place to make films and TV, including innovative technology such as IMAX, as well as world-class creative talent and infrastructure.

My question is this: est-ce que la ministre peut élaborer sur le travail et les mesures que notre gouvernement fait?

L'hon. Eleanor McMahon: Je tiens à remercier le député d'Etobicoke-Nord pour sa question.

I'd like to welcome the members of FilmOntario to the House for their inaugural Queen's Park day and thank them for the work they do to build up our province's film and television industry.

On this side of the House, we know that Ontario's screen-based industries showcase our province to the world and are true economic drivers. Investments in film and TV production support over 35,000 jobs and contribute \$1.7 billion to our economy.

A great recent example: The production of *It* hired over 1,200 cast and crew in communities across Ontario and spent over \$28 million in just 60 days of filming at local businesses, hotels, caterers, restaurants, and lumber and construction suppliers.

That's just one of the reasons it makes me so proud to work with our film and TV industry to support these productions that are garnering attention from around the world and bringing jobs and investment right here to Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Minister. It's clear that the Canadian film and TV industry has never been in better shape. It's flourishing.

It's important for people in northern Ontario as well to know that this government, under the leadership of Premier Wynne and Minister McMahon, is making investments that help grow the economy and create jobs. This government is committed to supporting and growing the film and television industry in northern Ontario as well. Flagship productions such as the critically acclaimed hit TV series *Letterkenny*, shot in Sudbury, have been made possible by grant increases approved by our government.

Can the minister please explain how specific programs that our government champions are working to help the television and film industry in the north and what this means for people in northern Ontario?

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: Our commitment to investing in stability in terms of our film and TV tax credits is just one of the reasons why northern Ontario is soaring. I'd like to thank the Minister of Northern Development and Mines for his tremendous leadership in building up our sector in the north. I know that the sector is especially important to the economy in northern Ontario, which this year invested nearly \$23 million in film and TV production in northern Ontario alone. Since 2014, NOHFC has invested \$76 million supporting 136 film and TV projects in northern Ontario. And of course, as the member mentioned, *Letterkenny* is just one of the successful shows.

We're committed to creating jobs in the north and giving our young people a diversified economy where they can have the choice to remain at home. That's just part of our plan to build Ontario up.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Ontario has a gap in its health care system. Too many people are slipping through the cracks and not receiving the mental health treatment they deserve. There is a mental health crisis in Ontario, and that is why Patrick Brown and the Ontario PC Party committed \$1.9 billion over 10 years to support mental health services. This will be the largest mental health commitment in Canadian provincial history.

Rob Jamieson, president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association, reacted to our People's Guarantee, saying, "Great to see such a commitment to mental health. We need to invest more for those in crisis and those requiring support."

Will the Liberal government match the PC Party commitment to mental health services?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

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Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I'm absolutely amazed at this change of heart, because it was only six or

seven months ago that the PC Party as a whole voted against our investments in mental health—investments that created Canada's first-ever program for cognitive behavioural therapy, which provides amazing outcomes for individuals with mood disorders like anxiety and depression. They voted against us creating up to 10 new wellness centres for youth across this province.

I'm still trying to figure out, with their \$12 billion in cuts that are explicitly referenced on page 76 of their "People Magazine"—I'm wondering what cuts they're going to make to health care, what cuts they're going to make to education and how many nurses they're going to fire, because we know when they were last in government, they closed 10,000 hospital beds and fired thousands of nurses.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: We will never vote for a Liberal budget. The minister is trying to change history—10 years ago, the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. For far too long, people are sitting on waiting lists without the mental health care that they need, when they need it.

Our plan is going to make a real difference for individuals dealing with mental health illnesses across Ontario. But don't take it from me. Kimberly Moran, the CEO of Children's Mental Health Ontario, said, "So pleased to see topping up elementary and secondary school supports for services targeted at improving mental health and well-being, including funding awareness campaigns as part of #peoplesguarantee."

Will the Liberal government agree to match the PC Party's historic commitment to mental health in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, they voted against our investments in behavioural supports in long-term care. They voted against our \$100-million dementia strategy to provide support for families and individuals with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia.

We saw a five-point plan from the PCs before. We saw it in 1995 from Mike Harris. He didn't even have cuts as draconian as expressed in their "People Magazine," \$12-billion cuts. Harris said he wouldn't negatively impact classroom education—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: You don't want to talk about the future, so you're talking about the past.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin—Caledon is warned.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Then he created an education crisis. He said that he would not close down hospitals. He closed down dozens of hospitals, fired thousands of nurses and closed 10,000 hospital beds.

This is the future under a PC government. We have to remember the past, particularly when they explicitly reference \$12 billion in cuts in their "People Magazine."

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Acting Premier. Years of neglect under the Liberals and Con-

servatives have resulted in a school repair backlog of over \$15 million, with serious consequences for the health and well-being of children. In the past two years, drinking water at more than 640 schools and child care centres has failed lead tests.

Under this Liberal government, school maintenance budgets are barely enough to keep schools from deteriorating further and there is no funding to proactively fix the backlog. We know that Patrick Brown and the PCs do not have a plan to fix Ontario's schools. Their platform is silent on school maintenance and repairs.

Speaker, other than flushing and testing, what is this Liberal government's plan to ensure the safety of drinking water in Ontario's schools?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The minister responsible for early years and child care.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I want to thank the member opposite for this very important question. I know how important it is to keep our children safe. As the minister responsible for early years and child care, safety is one of my top priorities.

When we send our kids off to school or child care centres, we want to know that they are safe, healthy and being looked after. We will continue to work with our partners to ensure that all children in child care and in schools in this province are safe and have access to clean drinking water.

Our standards are the strongest in Canada, and we have strict rules in place requiring immediate action should an issue arise, so parents can rest assured that their children are safe. While lead is generally not found in municipal drinking water, Ontario still requires every single daycare, school and child care centre in the province to test for it. We're the only province to do so, and I want parents and kids to know that over 98% of those facilities meet or are better than Health Canada standards.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Again to the Acting Premier: Flushing and testing is not a solution. There is no safe amount of lead in drinking water, especially for children, whose growing bodies absorb more lead than the average adult's. As lead accumulates over time, it can affect children's brain and nervous system development.

These recent lead tests showed concentrations at some schools that were 100 to 300 times greater than the provincial standard. Western University engineering professor Clare Robinson says, "For the lead issue, there's just really no quick fix" and that "all plumbing and fixtures containing lead" should "be replaced."

What is this Liberal government's plan to replace the plumbing and fixtures at the 640 schools and child care centres that tested above the provincial standard?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I want to again thank the member opposite because I think it's really important for parents out there to know that right now, Ontario's standards are the strongest in Canada. We are absolutely looking at making sure that we are ensuring the safety of our children and that they are in safe and healthy

environments when they head off to school or child care. Parents can rest assured that their kids are safe.

In fact, we have a long-term plan to address instances of lead in drinking water at schools and daycares. This includes providing \$1.4 billion this year for school repairs and upgrades—absolutely important upgrades and very necessary infrastructure upgrades. This is really the largest provincial investment ever in school renewal, so let's think about that. It's a historic investment.

As part of the plan, we've also strengthened Ontario's water standards, which are already the strictest in Canada. We want to make sure that children head off to school—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. I know that great strides are being taken in Ontario concerning correctional services. Howard Sapers, one of the leading voices in correctional services, was appointed as Ontario's independent adviser on correctional reform. He has delivered two comprehensive reports that are helping to inform Ontario's path forward.

Our government has implemented substantial change through segregation reform, new hires to support our front lines, our facility health care systems and more. Mr. Sapers and many community organizations, such as the John Howard Society, have recognized our commitment and are supporting our plan. Would the minister further detail our government's transformation of Ontario's correctional service system?

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you to the member from Beaches—East York for this very important question.

As of today, we have a total of 7,109 inmates in our custody and care at our 26 correctional facilities—7,109 inmates that our government and our dedicated correctional staff are committed to rehabilitating in a safe and humane manner.

Are there issues within our system? Yes. Our government is not shying away from that. But this is exactly why we are implementing the greatest change to corrections in a generation. This is not about scoring political points, and certainly not about rhetoric; this is about doing what's right.

Our government has taken action by hiring more staff, increasing mental health supports, investing in correctional infrastructure and soon-to-come legislation to cement real and lasting change for decades to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I want to thank the minister for her very enlightened response. I particularly look forward to seeing her on Political Blind Date with the member for Parkdale—High Park on TVOntario tonight at 9 o'clock. I appreciate her dedication to reforming Ontario's correctional system, a dedication you'll see in that TV show.

Both the minister and the Attorney General have been implementing progressive and modern changes to corrections, policing and the courts. I know that their goal and the objective of this government is to establish a truly 21st-century justice system. My constituents of Beaches–East York are expecting that our courts, our prisons, our policing and our support services are equitable, fair and inclusive.

Would the minister further detail our government's transformation of correctional services in Ontario?

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you again to the member from Beaches–East York for the supplementary.

Our government is building two new facilities in Ottawa and Thunder Bay that will serve as models of innovation and renewal for years to come, where the needs of inmates and staff are put first.

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It is proven that the warehousing of inmates simply doesn't work, but nobody seems to have told the Leader of the Opposition and/or the party opposite that. As a federal member of Parliament and an eager Harper Conservative, his greatest justice legacy was supporting mandatory minimums, which only resulted in the further warehousing of inmates.

We all know that any failed Conservative policy isn't complete without a substantial, misguided budget cut. The Leader of the Opposition voted for a 10% cut in Corrections Canada's budget while his government was locking more people up.

Mr. Speaker, we are basing our plan on the best evidence.

TREE PLANTING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Mr. David Harbec, the manager of Somerville Seedlings in Everett, wrote to the Premier recently and said, "Perhaps you were not aware that, as we speak, the managers in charge of the Ontario Tree Seed Plant closure are only giving us, the stakeholders, one option—not all options as Minister McGarry has stated as recently as November 15. I would suggest that the minister is grossly misinformed by her staff. The only option we are given is to get 'in line' in hopes to get some of the seed that is left on the shelf."

Mr. Harbec and the Ontario Tree Seed Coalition are asking the government to accept the transition proposal they submitted to the minister on October 13. The proposal allows the ministry to walk away from the seed business, but maintains their leadership role through the fiscal support of the province's propagation and forest genetic experts.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister actually work with stakeholders and accept the transition proposal?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you to the member opposite for his question today. I had an impromptu meeting recently with Rob Keen, who is the head of Forests Ontario, as you know, and who had just actually had a meeting with my ministry the day before. His

comments were that we were working very well with them to identify all options.

We are not only meeting with the stakeholders and the nurseries, but we are identifying new opportunities for our private sector. The private sector now provides 80% of the seed extraction and 100% of the stock growing for the province. I see this as an opportunity for private nurseries to expand operations as the ministry changes its focus to a science-based approach.

We continue to work with all of the stakeholders to develop new policies such as a new seed zone policy and to create a new genetic archive.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the minister: This minister claims she's still consulting, but those who have taken part in those meetings report back that her staff is just going through the motions. They're ignoring reasonable alternatives from the industry to protect jobs and the environment by keeping the tree seed plant operating.

Over two dozen environmental groups, municipalities and private sector nurseries are opposed to the minister's plan: She mentioned Forests Ontario; also, groups include Ducks Unlimited and the cities of Toronto and Ottawa. Ed Patchell, CEO of the Ferguson Forest Centre in my riding, wrote this to me: "This is really the last step in the Liberal government's abandonment of forestry in southern Ontario, leaving no controls on future forest genetics."

Will the minister shelve this ill-conceived plan, or does she want her legacy to be the abandonment of forestry in southern Ontario?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you very much for the supplementary. The new genetic archive will be a potential new source for the type of scientific information needed to address climate change. For example, our scientists will need to know exactly where the seeds have come from as they consider migrating tree species in reaction to changes in climate.

We continue to work with all of our stakeholders to continue all the important conversations and to ensure that, moving forward, we have a modern seed genetic archive and that we continue to grow the seeds.

It's important for me to note, too, Speaker, that the party opposite has not supported in the past—under their government in the mid-1990s, they privatized the system that put them in this situation to begin with.

We continue to work on this side of the House to ensure that we have savings for the taxpayers and the important programs that we have moving forward.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Acting Premier. People in London are worried today about an outbreak of a deadly virus in our city. In the past 18 months, invasive streptococcus has tragically taken the lives of nine people and sent 30 to the intensive care unit. Local health officials have reached out to the US

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for help. They say the outbreak is “very unusual.” That leaves people who are in hospital or have to sit in the emergency department today worried and scared that this virus is not yet under control.

What is this government doing to stop the deadly outbreak and keep people safe?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We’re very concerned about the outbreak of streptococcus A in London and Middlesex. Regrettably, it’s an issue. It’s taken many lives. It’s made many individuals sick—some, extremely ill. Unfortunately, it’s an epidemic that has been going on for some time, for more than a year, about 18 months. But I have to commend the public health unit for London and Middlesex who are doing an exemplary job at doing everything they can to control and eventually eliminate the risks associated with strep A in that region.

Of course, we’re working very closely, as is the public health unit, with Public Health Ontario so that they are providing all necessary resources, the best practices and activities, required to get control over this epidemic. It is regrettable that this type of situation does occur from time to time in the province but we’re working closely on it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: When an outbreak happens, our hospitals need to have the space and the resources to meet the demand. That’s true when we’re talking about a bad flu season or a deadly virus like streptococcus that can lead to toxic shock and even a flesh-eating disease. But under this government, London’s hospitals have been pushed to operate far beyond their capacity. Our hospitals are overcrowded every day. Even at the best of times people are being forced to wait in hallways and the ER for care they need.

Why has this government pushed our hospitals into an overcrowding and underfunding crisis that only makes it harder to respond to urgent outbreaks like the one that’s happening in London today?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I was actually gratified to hear the first part of this question but I’m absolutely disgusted at the second part. That that member would somehow conflate a very serious public health situation involving her constituents that has taken lives—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: How do you think those people feel in London?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, a situation that has taken lives and devastated families, many of them the most vulnerable, marginalized people in our society—that she would link that to the situation in her hospitals is absolutely disgusting. The public health unit that—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What’s disgusting is the shape our hospitals are in.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, you think—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of the third party is warned. I would—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Municipal Affairs is warned. I’m not going to stop.

Carry on.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, there need to be some things that are above partisan politics. I am a public health doctor myself. I know precisely what’s going on in London. I’m watching it closely. We’re providing all necessary supports. To use that tragic situation to talk about hospital overcrowding is despicable, Mr. Speaker. We will end this epidemic and we will provide the maximum supports to all—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Start the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That will do. New question.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is for Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, NAFTA negotiations have left my constituents feeling concerned and uneasy. Free trade and economic co-operation with the US and Mexico is important. Hundreds of thousands of good jobs rely on it.

I’m sure you can agree, Minister, that our farmers and food processors work hard each and every day and play a crucial role in the success of our \$37-billion farm and food sector. That is why it’s important that their concerns and interests are not overlooked during the negotiation process.

Can the minister please update this House on what our government is doing to support the interests of our agri-food sector during the NAFTA renegotiations?

1140

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Northumberland—Quinte West for a very important question this morning. Two-way agri-food trade between the United States and Ontario is worth nearly \$28 billion, and the significance of this number cannot be ignored. NAFTA remains a foundational agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico that works well for all three countries.

Over the past six months, I’ve been actively engaged with my US counterparts and businesses to ensure that as NAFTA is modernized, we “do no harm.” On this side of the House, we’ll continue to promote the interests of Ontario’s agri-food sector during renegotiations.

Not only have I been able to travel across several states to meet with many US representatives, but I continue my ongoing engagement with my Agricultural Advisory Committee, comprised of leaders in our sector, to reinforce that our government stands with Ontario’s agri-food sector.

Most recently, I visited Mexico during the latest round of NAFTA negotiations, where I continued to stand up for the interests of each and every single individual across our agricultural community. I had the opportunity—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Jeff Leal: —to meet Canada's chief negotiator to reiterate Ontario's position—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Minister, for that response. It's great to hear that our government continues to promote Ontario agri-food interests along with meeting with your US counterparts to strengthen our trading relationship.

Members of my constituency are concerned that our friends south of the border do not share our views with regard to our supply management system. The supply management system provides balance and protection for our farmers and producers and has played an integral role in the agri-food sector.

Minister, can you please provide the House with an update on how you are reaffirming Ontario's agricultural interests and the integrity of our supply management system?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Northumberland–Quinte West for his supplementary. Our government has made it clear that any proposals that threaten the integrity of supply management are absolute non-starters for the province of Ontario.

Recent proposals made by the United States during NAFTA renegotiations could potentially lead to the dismantling of Canada's supply management system, a system that represents 25% of agricultural production in the province of Ontario. Let me be clear: Supply management works well for our province's producers, our processors and consumers, as well as our economy.

Mr. Speaker, I was a little concerned when I read page 56 of the glossy magazine. I would have thought there would be some denunciation of one Maxime Bernier, who continues to traipse across Canada every day talking about the dismantling of Ontario's supply management system. All of us have to stand up against the kind of inaccurate facts that he continues to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

COURT FACILITY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Attorney General. Almost every court in eastern Ontario has video remands, but the Attorney General is keeping the Brockville Courthouse stuck in the past. It takes two officers to escort prisoners from the jail to the court's detention centre. A third officer must then monitor prisoners. Brockville police have done over 800 of these. There's a safety issue and also a terrible waste of valuable resources, all for remand appearances that last about a minute.

The jail is equipped to do video remands, but for five years the Attorney General has ignored pleas from the Brockville police to install video equipment in the court. Police chief Scott Fraser, the crown and defence lawyers in Brockville all agree it's time to stop this dangerous, costly and unnecessary prisoner transfer.

Speaker, will the Attorney General get with the times and finally press the play button on a video remand system?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think it's a very important question. We continue to evaluate all our courthouses across the province to make sure they have the appropriate technology available to them. We do have remand in many parts of the province. I'm not, obviously, at this moment aware of any technical challenges or issues there may be in relation to the Brockville Courthouse, but I can tell the member opposite that there is a very active evaluation that goes on. We always want to make sure that our courthouses are safe, that the people who work in the courthouses are also always safe, and that there is timely access to justice when issues arise.

I again thank the member for asking the question. Of course, I will look into where we are and what issue or challenges we may be facing in providing for video remand at the Brockville Courthouse.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will recognize the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport on a point of order.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I want to welcome officially the FilmOntario members joining us in the gallery—they've just dashed out, Speaker. More importantly, perhaps, I'd like to ask all members to join us at 5 p.m. in committee room 230 later today for a fabulous reception.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1146 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Soo Wong: Coming very shortly are two guests from my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt: Robert McColeman and Lorne Jurgensen. I want all of us to welcome them. Very shortly, I'll be speaking about them.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONE LAPTOP PER CHILD

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to celebrate today a great initiative undertaken by One Laptop per Child Canada, also known as OLPC Canada, in partnership with the Saugeen First Nation library and Saugeen First Nation youth.

Last Friday, hosted by April at the Aaron Roote Memorial Youth Centre in Southampton, OLPC Canada donated five computers and recording equipment to the library, to be used by 10 young people in their community to enhance their computer literacy skills. As part of

the program, the students developed a podcast—a variety of podcasts, to be specific—called the Indigenous Xchange, to focus their learning as well as discuss culturally relevant subjects such as language, art, culture and traditional foods.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation has also contributed to the initiative with a grant allocated over three months.

The project is anticipated to positively benefit 40 people in the Saugeen Ojibway Nation community, and is a great way to get young people engaged with their elders.

Being with the young people on Friday night—they were very proud of their work—we took time to have each of them show us their podcast. Based on their excitement about their podcast, their pride, and the pictures that showed them in action, developing their podcast, I could tell there was a significant return on investment in this particular instance, and it underscores the importance of young people being connected with and appreciating their cultural traditions.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Last week, the Ontario Health Coalition posted this urgent action alert regarding Bill 160. It was entitled “New Bill Allows Private For-Profit Hospitals and More Private For-Profit Clinics.”

It says the Liberal government “is moving forward with legislation that lifts the ban on private hospitals, rolls private hospitals in with private clinics and renames them, offensively, community health facilities, and makes it easier for private hospitals and clinics to expand and more difficult for the minister to stop them.”

“This legislation was brought in with no prior public consultation. It is a massive omnibus bill that repeals or enacts seven entire acts, and amends more than 30 acts.” The OHC was “given five minutes to present to the standing committee on this massive piece of legislation.... Without due consideration of the consequences, the government is making a grave mistake that could easily usher in very significant new privatization and threats to our local public hospitals.”

Speaker, the NDP opposes this next phase of Liberal privatization initiatives. We asked questions about it in the Legislature this morning, and we will continue to oppose the Liberal privatization agenda in health, hydro, transportation and education.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I want to talk a little bit today about the greatest privilege that I’ve had in my 17 and a half years as an MPP. That privilege has been to meet, four or five times a year, with a post-secondary advisory committee made up of students from Mohawk College, Redeemer University College and McMaster University. The student presidents and other key student leaders meet, and we talk and we have different ministers come in to elaborate on what’s happening here in the Legislative Assembly and with various policy areas.

I’ve benefited enormously from listening to students. I want to assure the House that we, as a province and as a nation, are in very good shape, given the quality of the students that I encounter every day. I try to spend at least one full day a month on campuses, and it’s helpful.

We talk about OSAP. There was a time when Redeemer students weren’t eligible, and we fought that fight and got that changed, as well as some credits for field placement folk that weren’t there.

We talk a lot about quality education, and, of late, we have been speaking a fair bit about mental health. In fact, we have a couple of representatives from each institution who are now working with me and the administration of their institutions to develop and, hopefully, implement a mental health strategy for post-secondary students.

ORVIL HAMMOND

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise to pay tribute to Orvil Hammond of Bracebridge, a community leader and born entrepreneur who passed away on Remembrance Day at age 88.

Orv entered the transportation business in 1944, when his principal told him to quit school and go to work. With a special permit to drive, Orv took up driving a taxi, and a year later bought his own car and started a taxi business.

By the 1960s, when Mr. Hammond was my school bus driver, he had expanded Hammond’s Taxi into student transportation. Mr. Hammond was also my first driving instructor, teaching me to shift gears as he drove the bus when I was very young. I wasn’t the only one: At his funeral, his children and grandchildren all talked about how he taught them to drive.

Hammond Transportation, now run by Orv’s son Greg, has a fleet of more than 175 school buses and coaches, and employs 300 people. When you drive into Bracebridge on Highway 118, you can’t miss the Hammond Transportation yard.

Orv Hammond helped to build Bracebridge. He was a generous donor to the school breakfast programs, food banks and children’s sports teams.

He and his wife, Fran, raised a wonderful family: Jim, Brad, Greg and Beverley.

I want to share today my condolences with the extended Hammond family and let them know how well-loved and respected Orv Hammond was. Orv Hammond was one of a kind, and he will be missed by many.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Peggy Sattler: On August 1, 2013, Elisa Kilbourne’s son Jeremy Bowley dropped her off at work in London before heading to his summer job. She had no idea that this was the last time she would see him alive. At the age of 21, Jeremy died when a tent pole at his work struck an overhanging power wire. A Ministry of Labour investigation later found that none of the six workers on the crew—all 25 years of age or younger—

had received safety training, and no one from the company had assessed the site in advance.

Elisa's journey since that day has been remarkable. In the face of unimaginable grief, she became involved with Threads of Life and is a strong advocate for workplace safety. She has also been closely involved with the coroner's inquest jury into Jeremy's death, which last week released recommendations to prevent more young workers from dying on the job. These include a new high school curriculum on occupational health and safety, and the rights of students to refuse unsafe work.

With the expansion of experiential learning across all Ontario schools, colleges and universities, occupational health and safety training for students has never been more critical. I call on this Liberal government to immediately adopt all of the coroner's inquest jury recommendations, and especially mandatory workplace safety training for young people in Ontario. This is the least we can do for Elisa Kilbourne and every parent like her who has lost a child to workplace death.

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

Mr. John Fraser: I rise today to recognize and celebrate physician assistants in Ontario. November 27 was National Physician Assistant Day in Canada.

Working alongside physicians and other health professionals, Canada's PAs are having a positive impact on the quality of care that Canadians are receiving.

National PA Day is about public education and awareness of the profession, as well as celebrating those medical professionals and thanking them for the work that they do. We recognize the significant impact that physician assistants have on internal medicine, acute care, primary care and other areas of our health care system.

Speaker, my mother was a nurse at National Defence Medical Centre for many years, and she worked with many medics. I know there are many physicians that come from our Canadian Armed Forces, and I want to give a shout-out to them as well.

Physician assistants also play a critical role in maintaining a strong and sustainable health care system.

I'd like to thank PAs for their dedication and commitment to patient care in Ontario.

I would also like to recognize the Canadian Association of Physician Assistants, CAPA, for their advocacy work and commitment toward physician assistants across Ontario and the country.

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BUSH PLANES

Mr. Ross Romano: It is my pleasure to stand here today and recognize Mr. John Lalonde of Sault Ste. Marie, the Canadian Bushplane Heritage Centre and their incredible team of volunteers. In 1997, Mr. Lalonde and several other volunteers undertook to rebuild a de

Havilland Fox Moth aircraft, and 20 years later, they can proudly say that they have completed the task that they set out to do.

The de Havilland Fox Moth was invented in 1932 in the United Kingdom. After the Second World War, 53 of these units were built in Canada, and 39 of them remained in Canada after production. Most of these were flown in float/ski configuration and were used as bush planes. The aircraft was originally designed as a compact, economical passenger aircraft, with space for three passengers behind the engine, and the pilot seat was just outside, near the aft of the plane. The company also designed a special gurney so that this aircraft could be used as an air ambulance in times of need. The wings of the plane would actually fold in for easy storage.

Bush planes are an essential component of Canadian history, and the Canadian Bushplane Heritage Centre in Sault Ste. Marie recognizes the monumental contributions that bush planes have made. Their mandate is to foster awareness and appreciation of that.

This astonishing piece of history was re-created by hand, with countless hours invested by these volunteers, who are simply committed to preserving Canadian heritage. The fruit of their labour is a tangible piece of Canadian history that will provide the next generation of Canadians with a first-hand link to the past.

The team who dedicated themselves to this project hope that they can receive approval to have this plane flown on special occasions by pilot Dave Hadfield, who's the brother of Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield. I want to share how proud I am of this team and their dedication to our history. I commend them for their 20-year commitment to this extraordinary project, and for once again putting Sault Ste. Marie on the map.

ROBERT MCCOLEMAN

Ms. Soo Wong: One of the great privileges of serving as an MPP is meeting the talented constituents of Scarborough-Agincourt. It is my honour to rise today to recognize the exceptional work of Robert McColeman, a paramedic superintendent with Northumberland county.

This year, Robert McColeman was awarded the Governor General's Emergency Medical Services Exemplary Service Medal. This medal recognizes Robert's professionalism in emergency medical services to the public, and the performance of these duties in an exemplary manner, characterized by good conduct, industry and efficiency.

Robert is entering his 38th year of what he calls "a long career of rendering aid to the sick and injured." He says that working with other paramedics and health care partners is truly a rewarding experience.

Robert's service to his community includes being a champion of paramedic education, both as a student and as an educator. He previously worked with Toronto Paramedic Services as a driver educator. This important role enabled Robert to train new paramedics on road and speed safety to keep Ontarians safe.

Robert believes in lifelong education, and this is demonstrated by his recent completion of Loyalist College's program for managing and leading in a municipal environment.

Robert McColeman, on behalf of the Ontario Legislature, I would like to thank you for your long and exemplary service as a paramedic and driver educator for the past 38 years. Again, congratulations on your recent Governor General's Emergency Medical Services Exemplary Service Medal.

COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS

Mrs. Julia Munro: It's my pleasure to be able to talk today about the amazing Miriam King in Bradford.

Yesterday I learned with great sadness that two local papers in my riding are closing their doors: the Bradford Times and the Innisfil Examiner. We all know that the way people consume media is changing, and one consequence of that includes a decline in print advertising revenue.

Yesterday, the citizens of Bradford, West Gwillimbury and Innisfil lost a huge supporter of our community life. Miriam King was that supporter. Her enthusiasm for our communities was legendary. She managed to get from one event to another, sometimes 12 to 15 in one day. We will miss her dedication.

Sadly, it is not only my community that is impacted by these changes. Community newspapers across Ontario are being closed, including Orillia's Packet and Times and the Barrie Examiner, which has operated since 1864.

My thoughts today are with the nearly 300 people across Ontario who are losing their jobs as a result—a very real human impact. In particular, my thoughts are with my friend Miriam King, the editor of the Bradford Times.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 166, An Act to amend or repeal various Acts and to enact three new Acts with respect to the construction of new homes and ticket sales for events / Projet de loi 166, Loi modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois et édictant trois nouvelles lois en ce qui concerne la construction de logements neufs et la vente de billets d'événements.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed. Carried.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 15, 2017, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FAIRNESS IN PETROLEUM PRODUCTS PRICING ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ EN MATIÈRE D'ÉTABLISSEMENT DU PRIX DES PRODUITS PÉTROLIERS

Mr. Bisson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 183, An Act to regulate the price of petroleum products / Projet de loi 183, Loi réglementant le prix des produits pétroliers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

M. Gilles Bisson: Le projet de loi réglementant le prix des produits pétroliers fait que la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario est investie du pouvoir de réglementer le prix de détail et la marge bénéficiaire du grossiste à l'égard de la vente de produits pétroliers dans la province. Le lieutenant-gouverneur en conseil est investi du pouvoir de régir le pouvoir de la commission. La commission et le lieutenant-gouverneur en conseil exercent ces pouvoirs en fonction des objectifs suivants :

(1) Protéger les intérêts des consommateurs en ce qui concerne l'établissement prévisible et uniforme du prix de détail des produits pétroliers.

(2) Empêcher les pratiques d'établissement des prix qui minent la stabilité et la compétitivité des marchés de détail des produits pétroliers, notamment dans les régions rurales, éloignées et du Nord.

(3) Assurer la transparence et le caractère raisonnable des prix de l'essence.

The bill regulates the price of petroleum products. The Ontario Energy Board is given power to regulate the retail price and wholesale markup with respect to the sale of petroleum products in the province. The Lieutenant Governor in Council is given power to govern the board's power.

The board and the Lieutenant Governor in Council are guided by the following objectives:

(1) To protect the interests of consumers with respect to the predictable and consistent retail pricing of petroleum products.

(2) To prevent pricing practices that undermine the stability and competitiveness of retail markets for petroleum products, including retail markets in remote, rural and northern areas.

(3) To ensure transparency and reasonableness with respect to the prices of petroleum products.

PETITIONS

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas about 200,000 to 300,000 people in Ontario are injured on the job every year;

“Whereas over a century ago, workers in Ontario who were injured on the job gave up the right to sue their employers, in exchange for a system that would provide them with just compensation;

“Whereas decades of cost-cutting have pushed injured workers into poverty and onto publicly funded social assistance programs, and have gradually curtailed the rights of injured workers;

1520

“Whereas injured workers have the right to quality and timely medical care, compensation for lost wages, and protection from discrimination;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to accomplish the following for injured workers in Ontario:

“Eliminate the practice of ‘deeming’ or ‘determining,’ which bases compensation on phantom jobs that injured workers do not actually have;

“Ensure that the WSIB prioritizes and respects the medical opinions of the health care providers who treat the injured worker directly;

“Prevent compensation from being reduced or denied based on ‘pre-existing conditions’ that never affected the worker’s ability to function prior to the work injury.”

Speaker, I will affix my name to this petition as soon as I have a pen, and I will send it down with Vanditha.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas quality of care for the 77,000 residents of (LTC) homes is a priority for many Ontario families; and

“Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in LTC homes to keep pace with residents’ increasing acuity and the growing number of residents with complex behaviours; and

“Whereas several Ontario coroner’s inquests into LTC homes deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and staffing levels and the most reputable studies on this topic recommends 4.1 hours of direct care per day;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“Amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard of four hours per resident per day adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

I agree with this and will sign it.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas a poll conducted by Environics ... showed that 92% of Canadians are in favour of better animal protection laws. Another poll conducted by Humane Society International ... showed 68% of Canadians support a ban on fur farming;

“Whereas numerous countries and regions recognize that animals’ basic needs cannot be met in any fur farm housing system and have already banned fur farming, the import and/or sale of fur products. The United Kingdom, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Serbia, Denmark, Netherlands” have all passed legislation banning fur farming;

“Whereas animals on fur farms are subjected to long periods of inactivity, lack of stimulation and are restricted from performing natural behaviours (like swimming or interacting with an earthen floor), leading to frustration, stress and stereotypical (abnormal repetitive) behaviour such as pacing, cage biting, self-mutilation, physical deformities and high levels of infant mortality....;

“Whereas confining and killing animals such as fox, mink, chinchilla and rabbit solely for an unnecessary luxury item like fur is inhumane and cruel;

“We, the undersigned, believe fur farming is inherently cruel and we petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to consider implementing a ban on fur farming.”

I will put my initials on this and give this to assistant Natalie.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Collingwood General and Marine Hospital is challenged to support the growing needs of the community within its existing space;

“Whereas a building condition assessment found the major systems of the hospital will require renewal within the next 10 years;

“Whereas substandard facilities exist in the emergency department; there is no space in the dialysis department to expand, and there is a lack of storage and crowding in many areas of the building; and, structurally, additional floors can’t be added to the existing building to accommodate growth;

“Whereas there is no direct connection from the medical device repurposing department to the operating room;

“Whereas there is a lack of quiet rooms, interview rooms and lounge space” for the public;

“Whereas Collingwood General and Marine Hospital deserves equitable servicing comparable to other Ontario hospitals;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government immediately provide the necessary funding to Collingwood General and Marine Hospital so that it can build a new hospital to serve the needs of the community.”

Of course I agree with this, and I will sign it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I’d like to thank the Ontario Nurses’ Association for this petition, which reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas providing high-quality, universal, public health care is crucial for a fair and thriving Ontario; and

“Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to registered nurses ... and hurt patient care; and

“Whereas, in 2015 alone, Ontario lost more than 1.5 million hours of RN care due to cuts; and

“Whereas procedures are being off-loaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and

“Whereas funded services are being cut from hospitals and are not being provided in the community; and

“Whereas cutting skilled care means patients suffer more complications, readmissions and death;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

“Commit to restoring hospital base operating funding to at least cover the costs of inflation and population growth;

“Create a fully-funded multi-year health human resources plan to bring Ontario’s ratio of registered nurses to population up to the national average;

“Ensure hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality and integrated care for clinical procedures and stop plans for moving such procedures into private, unaccountable clinics.”

I couldn’t agree more. I will affix my signature and will give it to page Allan to take to the table.

ELEVATOR MAINTENANCE

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly.

“Whereas we’ve seen rapid growth of vertical communities across Ontario; and

“Whereas elevators are an important amenity for a resident of a high-rise residential building; and

“Whereas ensuring basic mobility and standards of living for residents remain top priority; and

“Whereas the unreasonable delay of repairs for elevator services across Ontario is a concern for residents of high-rise buildings resulting in constant breakdowns, mechanical failures and ‘out of service’ notices for unspecified amounts of time;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Urge the Ontario Legislature to support Bill 109, the Reliable Elevators Act, 2017, that requires the repairs of elevators to be completed within a reasonable and pre-

scribed time frame. We urge the Legislature to address these concerns that are shared by residents of Trinity-Spadina and across Ontario.”

I fully support the petition. I give my petition to page Javeriar.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas municipal governments in Ontario do not have the right to approve landfill projects in their communities, but have authority for making decisions on all other types of development; and

“Whereas this outdated policy allows private landfill operators to consult with local residents and municipal councils but essentially ignore them; and

“Whereas proposed Ontario legislation (Bill 139) will grant municipalities additional authority and autonomy to make decisions for their communities; and

“Whereas municipalities already have exclusive rights for approving casinos and nuclear waste facilities within their communities and, further, that the province has recognized the value of municipal approval for the siting of power generation facilities; and

“Whereas the recent report from the Ontario Environmental Commissioner has found that Ontario has a garbage problem, particularly from waste generated within the city of Toronto. Municipalities across Ontario are quietly being identified and targeted as potential landfill sites for future Toronto garbage by private landfill operators; and

“Whereas other communities should not be forced to take Toronto waste, as landfills can contaminate local watersheds, air quality, dramatically increase heavy truck traffic on community roads, and reduce the quality of life for local residents; and

“Whereas municipalities should have the exclusive right to approve or reject these projects, and assess whether the potential economic benefits are of sufficient value to offset any negative impacts and environmental concerns, in addition to and separate from successful completion of the Ontario environmental assessment process;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Pass legislation, or other appropriate legal instrument, that formally grants municipalities (both single- and two-tier) the authority to approve landfill projects in or adjacent to their communities, prior to June 2018.”

I affix my signature. I totally agree with this petition.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Colette Pilon, from Capreol in my riding, for this petition on gas prices. It reads as follows:

“Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

“Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

“Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

“Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition.”

I support this petition and will affix my name to it.

1530

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. James J. Bradley: I have received a petition from a group of individuals representing injured workers. It reads as follows:

“Whereas about 200,000 to 300,000 people in Ontario are injured on the job every year;

“Whereas over a century ago, workers in Ontario who were injured on the job gave up the right to sue their employers, in exchange for a system that would provide them with just compensation;

“Whereas decades of cost-cutting have pushed injured workers into poverty and onto publicly funded social assistance programs, and have gradually curtailed the rights of injured workers;

“Whereas injured workers have the right to quality and timely medical care, compensation for lost wages, and protection from discrimination;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to accomplish the following for injured workers in Ontario:

“Eliminate the practice of ‘deeming’ or ‘determining,’ which bases compensation on phantom jobs that injured workers do not actually have;

“Ensure that the WSIB prioritizes and respects the medical opinions of the health care providers who treat the injured worker directly;

“Prevent compensation from being reduced or denied based on ‘pre-existing conditions’ that never affected the worker’s ability to function prior to the work injury.”

I am handing this to Aditya.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government’s mismanagement of the energy sector;

“Whereas the billion-dollar gas plants cancellation, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020; and

“Whereas the Liberal government wasted \$2 billion on the flawed smart meter program; and

“Whereas the recent announcement to implement the Ontario Electricity Support Program will see average household hydro bills increase an additional \$137 per year starting in 2016; and

“Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

“Whereas home heating and electricity are a necessity for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government’s mismanagement of the energy sector;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario’s power consumers, including families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity.”

I’ll affix my signature and send it to the table with Natalie.

SHINGLES VACCINE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario announced that starting September 15, 2016, the shingles vaccine would be available to all seniors 65 years to 70 years free of charge...;

“Whereas seniors over the age of 70 years will still be required to pay for the vaccine if they choose;

“Whereas the government of Ontario claims that studies show that the vaccine is highly effective when seniors are vaccinated between the ages of 65 and 70 and will not cover the vaccine for all Ontario seniors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“This is unfair to seniors over the age of 70 and we urge the government to expand the coverage so that all Ontario seniors are eligible for the free shingles vaccine.”

I agree, I will sign it and send it up to the front.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas one in three women will experience some form of sexual assault in her lifetime;

“When public education about sexual violence and harassment is not prioritized, myths and attitudes informed by misogyny become prevalent. This promotes rape culture;

“Less than 10% of sexual violence cases are reported to police. For every 33 that are reported, only three result in a conviction;

“Sexual violence and harassment survivors too often feel revictimized by the systems set in place to support them. The voices of survivors, in all their diversity, need to be amplified;...

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Support the findings and recommendations of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment’s final report, highlighting the need for inclusive and open dialogue to address misogyny and rape culture; educate about sexual violence and harassment to promote social change ... and address attrition rates ... including examining ‘unfounded’ cases, developing enhanced prosecution models and providing free legal advice for survivors.”

I agree with this. I will put my initials to it and give this to page Davis.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The time for petitions has now expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 28, 2017, on the motion for time allocation of the following bill:

Bill 177, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 177, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I have a lot of problems with schedule 33 of the budget bill. My key concern with this schedule is that there’s a group that will be harmed by this bill’s enactment, and the group is Ontario pensioners. There will be no doubt about it, Speaker.

Within schedule 33, there are three parts in particular that stand out as needing some revisions. These include changes to solvency rules, the improper use of legislative regulations, and the failure to implement meaningful changes to the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund.

According to the government’s announcement, new pension solvency requirements for pension plans are going to be 85%. This is a 15% reduction to the requirements which currently set the benchmark for employers to keep at 100%. One hundred per cent funded means that if a company goes bankrupt tomorrow, pensioners will be able to collect every cent of what they’re entitled to. If pension plans had solvency rates at 100%, that would be ideal—most are at 85% or below at this point. However, that is not the case.

While dropping rates to 85% could still mean that pension funds are adequately funded, in practice that

might not have good results. With a reduced benchmark, many plans may further drop their solvency rates because they feel they can get away with even lower funding levels. That is why a 100% funding benchmark is ideal to maintain. With lower solvency rates, there is a much higher likelihood that pensioners will not receive their full pensions if a company goes belly up. The fact is that any funding solvency below 100% is going to allow companies to ignore their pension obligations even more.

Essentially, what the government is doing here is creating more Sears and Nortel disasters. Who knows which company will be next, but with an 85% solvency rate, I have a strong feeling that there are going to be many more groups of distraught pensioners down the line. The right thing to do would be to keep these rates at 100%.

Here’s the funny thing about the 15% rate. While the government has said that the solvency requirements for pensions will be 85%, according to the legislation, there is no clear solvency requirement outlined. After a long search, Speaker, through the list of regulations, my colleagues and I couldn’t find a single regulation that explained what “reduced solvency deficiency” meant. We sent a letter to the ministry asking where the regulation was. They got back to us, saying the definition would be forthcoming. Essentially, the Legislature is going to be forced to vote on a bill without knowing what “reduced solvency deficiency” means and what solvency rates are going to be. Speaker, that’s huge. How can we know the implications of this bill if we don’t have any way of knowing what it says?

Potentially, what the Liberals are doing is creating an ad lib legislation, no pun intended. If this legislation passes, the ministers go back to fill in the blanks. This is not the right way to handle things. They should be going back to their constituencies and filling in the blanks with their own ideas.

This legislation also outlines an increase in coverage to the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund. I’m happy with the upgrade, but it’s far from the \$2,500 a month recommended years ago by the Ontario Expert Commission on Pensions appointed by the Liberals and chaired by Harry Arthurs. It’s even further from the Canadian Federation of Pensioners’ recent recommendation that there be no cap on the PBG fund. With some changes to funding and entry requirements, the PBGF could cover pension shortfalls much more than they already do today.

Another big issue I have with the legislation is that any of the changes made to the PBG fund will not help pensioners whose plans have already been wound up. These minimal increases in coverage will only apply to members of plans which wind up “on or after the day the amendments come into force.”

1540

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Your time has expired.

Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to speak about time allocation on Bill 177, and the bill itself, An Act to

implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes.

I'd say that this isn't much of an economic statement for the people of Ontario. It's more like a series of reckless and expensive pre-election ploys pulled out by a government in trouble that's desperate to get re-elected in a few months.

Under this government, life is getting harder for hard-working Ontarians. The middle class continues to work harder for longer hours and have less and less left over. Under the Liberals, the price of everything has increased. Groceries, gasoline, electricity and so much more are now more expensive than ever.

This is not what the people of Ontario deserve. Ontario deserves and needs a plan, a real plan. What they are being given is a Liberal vote-buying scheme.

For 14 long years, this government has been in office and has done nothing to help hard-working Ontarians. We cannot support the reckless financial path this government is leading our province down.

It's astonishing to me to see 46 schedules in this legislation, and very few of them have anything to do with finances or improving our economy or helping hard-working Ontarians.

Here is a list of some of the matters in this bill: francophone issues; recommendations from the Elliot Lake mall collapse; the building code; the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act; the Child Care and Early Years Act; the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act; the Municipal Act; the Education Act and more. These are all important matters, but they have no place in the province's annual financial statement.

We support many of these schedules and, in fact, one of them we proposed ourselves, but we do not support the financial plan of this government. We want all of the schedules not related to the finances of the province separated into different pieces of legislation. Many of these issues deserve their own debate and should not be crammed into a bill that is supposed to be about a fiscal update.

The financial direction the Liberal government continues to follow is one, I say again, that we will not support. It's a direction that does not help hard-working Ontarians. It's simply about getting a tired and exhausted government re-elected.

We've seen 14 years of waste and out-of-control spending by this government. Services for the people of Ontario continue to decline. We have hospital patients being treated on stretchers in hallways all over the province. Our seniors find themselves on long waiting lists for long-term-care beds. People aren't getting the PSW support they need. We have schools across the province being forced to close because of funding cutbacks. Speaker, our citizens are tired of paying more and getting less.

What do they see from this government in this bill? Schedule 41 amends the Taxpayer Protection Act to provide a way to increase the average tax rate under the Provincial Land Tax Act without a referendum.

All this government does is take, take and take. The people of this province are not ATMs for the Liberal government to raid every time they need money.

The government talks about fiscal responsibility and working towards a sustainable future. Speaker, I ask: Is it fiscally responsible to double our provincial debt, which is now \$350 billion? Is it sustainable to pretend to have a balanced budget when the Auditor General and the Financial Accountability Officer tell us we don't? Is it sustainable to triple electricity prices for hard-working Ontarians—that's a 300% increase over the term of this government—and then brag about giving ratepayers a 25% rebate?

The rebate is being paid for with more debt—and more expensive debt—that will take many years to pay off. The \$25 billion they borrowed to temporarily lower hydro rates is going to cost at least \$43 billion, or it could be as high as \$92 billion. How can any of this be considered fiscally responsible or sustainable, I ask?

None of us should forget the record of this government. We should all remember the waste that has happened: \$8 billion for eHealth; \$1.1 billion for cancelling the gas plants; \$2 billion on smart meters; \$400 million on Presto card overruns; \$304 million overspent on the Pan Am Games; \$70 million on the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan—there never was an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan; \$71 million spent on a diabetes registry that was cancelled before it was finished; a \$61-million loss on the sale of Ontera; \$50 million on a drug information system that won't be complete until 2020, and the list goes on and on.

Our plan, the People's Guarantee, will bring real change to Ontario. We recognize the need for change that works for the people, not Liberal insiders. The People's Guarantee includes 22.5% lower income taxes for the middle class, a 75% refund on child care expenses, 12% more off hydro bills, the largest mental health commitment in Canadian provincial history and the first-ever trust, integrity and accountability act.

The People's Guarantee is a plan that will make life more affordable for everyone. It's the change that Ontario needs. We have released our platform six months before the election. Our leader, Patrick Brown, has pledged to not run for a second term if he does not fulfill his key promises.

Our plan was developed after the largest consultation process in the history of our party. We listened to what we heard, and we developed the plan Ontarians need and can believe in. It's a platform that is fully costed and affordable.

We will start by giving middle-class workers a raise. Under this government, the middle class has less disposable income. In our plan—

Mr. Grant Crack: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order: I recognize the member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

Mr. Grant Crack: I think we're dealing with Bill 177—

Mr. John Yakabuski: We're dealing with the time allocation motion.

Mr. Grant Crack: It's the time allocation on Bill 177, but I think he's referring to his platform—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. I've been listening. I appreciate your input, but I refer back to the member from Simcoe—Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Under this government, the middle class has less disposable income. In our plan, households earning less than \$100,000 per year will see income taxes cut by 25%.

Right now, child care costs in Ontario—you can believe this or not; it's true—are the highest in the country. Ontario families struggle to find child care, and if they can find it, they struggle to pay for it. We're going to make child care more attainable and affordable. We will create 100,000 new spaces, and families struggling with child care costs will get up to 75% of their expenses refunded.

We will fix hydro to provide lasting relief to families. Under this government, hydro rates have tripled—300%. Families now pay \$1,000 more per year than they did in 2003. We already know this government plans to raise rates again as soon as it is elected. We will lower hydro bills by 12% more. The average household will save \$173 per year on average on their bills.

We will treat mental health no differently than physical health—

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order: I recognize the member from Davenport.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you, Speaker, for recognizing me. I believe we are here to debate Bill 177, the fall economic bill and the time allocation debate. I haven't heard any reference to that from the member opposite, except his plan. If he can please—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Okay, thank you very much. I appreciate the interlude, but I've been listening carefully, and based on what this is—

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'm listening very carefully also—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Don't challenge the Speaker. Thank you very much.

I return to the member from Simcoe—Grey to continue.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I'm hitting a few nerves on the other side.

We will treat mental health no differently than physical health. Too many people in our society are slipping through the cracks. We hear those stories every day. We'll make the largest investment in mental health in Canadian provincial history. Our commitment is \$1.9 billion over 10 years to mental health initiatives. That will match the money coming from the federal government over the same period of time, to bring it to \$3.8 billion, which is certainly a record. As a former Minister of Health, I'm very proud of Patrick Brown and our party for this initiative.

We'll bring accountability back to the government, something that is badly needed. Part of this time

amendment is lack of accountability to the people of Ontario and lack of accountability to the members in this House, and a complete disrespect of the proper legislative process.

If you want me to keep talking about that, I'd be happy to do that, Liberals over there.

We will introduce the first-ever trust, integrity and accountability act for Ontario. It's sad. I have 27 years in the House, and I didn't think we would need one of these trust and accountability and integrity acts. We apparently need one, because of the shenanigans that have gone on over the last 14 years of political corruption in this province. It has got to stop, and we're going to put a stop to it and we'll bring in laws to make sure that happens.

Mr. Speaker, as I wind up, I just want to say that we're on the side of Ontario families. They need a break; we're going to give them a break. We're going to go back to good management, good government, honest government, a government with integrity, a transparent government. We will get your hydro bills down, improve mental health services, and improve health services across the board—no more hallway medicine.

You can trust that we'll do what we said we're going to do. That has been our record in the past. We look forward to defeating the Liberals in the next election.

With respect to Bill 177, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice to split Bill 177. That's the way it should have been done in the first place. This is a very under-the-table way of bundling a bunch of legislation that is not related to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. The member is seeking unanimous consent to separate Bill 177. All in favour? I heard a no.

Back to the member, please.

1550

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm disappointed the Liberals would do that. There are good pieces of legislation in here. But, as you know, as with all budget bills or fiscal statements, there's one vote, and we do not—we proudly do not—support the financial and fiscal plan of this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Yvan Baker: Speaker, we all came here to serve our constituents to make their lives better. I'm proud of Bill 177 and how it will help people in my community and communities across this province.

Every day that we've debated this bill I've been disappointed. I thought I couldn't be more disappointed by the opposition and yet every day I'm even more disappointed. I'm disappointed because every day that we've debated this bill, the opposition has had the opportunity to debate the substance of the bill, and what's fascinating is that they've taken every opportunity—multiple opportunities—to try to delay this bill, to slow it down. I came here to get results. The people opposite obviously didn't come here to get results; they came here to politic.

Let's talk about what the opposition has been doing. The opposition has argued that we need to separate out

this bill and treat it as a bunch of separate bills so that we can debate further and give wholesome debate. Except, you know what, Speaker? When they had opportunities to debate the legislation, they didn't talk about the bill. They talked about a range of things: One of the members talked yesterday about other bills. The member who just sat down couldn't help but talk about their platform. We had members talking about process items. Very little time on the opposite side, especially in the PC caucus, was spent talking about the bill.

We're here to talk about the bill, and we're required to do that because that's what the people of Ontario care about. That's what the people watching care about and that's what the people want. I'm incredibly disappointed with the opposition that not only did they not debate the legislation—which they should, because that's what matters to people in Ontario and that's what our constituents expect to see—but they had the gall to come forward time and time again and ask us to separate out the bill because they wanted more debate time. Then, the debate time that they did have they used to talk about other things—everything except the bill. It's incredibly disappointing on the part of the opposition.

What's more disappointing than even that is that by asking that we separate out the bill, the opposition is basically saying that they don't support it. The opposition is basically saying, "Oh, we support the different components of the bill," but they know full well that by separating out all of the various components of this bill what would happen is that each one would have to be treated separately and therefore could not be passed as quickly or even before the next election, which means that some parts of the legislation would not get passed, which means that the people who benefit from this bill would not benefit from the bill—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Let's give some examples, like the folks in Grassy Narrows who are waiting for results—these folks want to delay that. They want to separate it out and kick it down the road. That's the PC plan. That is disappointing. Like those seniors who are going to benefit from the initiatives here in our seniors action plan—they would delay that; they would postpone that—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. I asked for order earlier and it appears as though I'm not getting it. For all members in the House, those of you know who you are—with regard to warnings from this morning, those warnings carry over to this afternoon. I won't hesitate to name if that is the case. Please, let's have civility in this House when it comes to this debate.

Please continue.

Mr. Yvan Baker: At the end of the day, clearly, the opposition's argument is flawed. They don't actually support this bill and they've wasted all their time. They

had a ton of time and they used it to talk about everything except the bill. That's the first point.

Secondly, by proposing that we separate it out, they're effectively saying, "We're okay if the good portions of this never pass." So the people of Grassy Narrows, the seniors, the small businesses, the apprentices and all those folks who benefit from this bill, the opposition is basically telling them, "We do not support these initiatives because we want to kick them out so far that they never see the light of day here in the Legislature." That's not what this side believes. This side believes in getting results for those folks I just talked about and many others in communities across our province.

That's what I'm standing here to say: Let's get this bill moved on, let's get it passed so that we can get these results for our seniors, for our young people, for our apprentices, for our small businesses—for all the folks who are going to benefit from this legislation.

Speaker, this bill is part of a broader fiscal plan, a plan that has seen us balance the budget this year and will see us balance it in the years to come. As the PA to the Minister of Finance, and previously the PA to the President of the Treasury Board, I've had the opportunity to do the hard work to make sure—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): A point of order: I recognize the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, was I warned this morning?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): That is not a point of order.

Please continue with debate, member from Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: The games and the antics just show how insecure they are in their position. Clearly, they're bothered by the fact that I'm calling them out on the truth. The reality, the truth, is that this is a good bill. Instead of talking about everything but the bill, instead of obfuscating, instead of trying to delay it, they should just support it and move on.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order: They can't use that word.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I recognize the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I believe the member for Etobicoke Centre was using unparliamentary language.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I didn't hear that; I didn't catch that.

Again, back to the member to continue with debate, please.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Ultimately, Speaker, this is a bill that's going to make a difference for people. Frankly, there is so much to say about this. On this side, we've been talking about that. This is, first of all, part of a fiscal plan where we balance the budget. We've done it by doing the hard work of applying good business principles

to how we manage the finances of the province. We have not slashed and burned the way that group of folks has done in the past or is advocating for now. What we've done is, we've been thoughtful. We've gone through each line in the budget and we've tried to deliver better value for money. We've done that by measuring the results of each program, line by line, and then making sure we're investing in those programs that are delivering the best results.

That's how we've come to a balanced budget. It's partly through economic growth—there's no question—but it's also partly through sound fiscal management, tightening our belts and getting value for taxpayer dollars. I know that my constituents of Etobicoke Centre will value that.

We're investing in the economy through infrastructure, through a highly skilled workforce, through the new OSAP. This is about investing in future opportunities for young people—and for people of all ages, frankly, because OSAP will benefit people of all ages, and the infrastructure will as well. These are the kinds of things that ensure our economy is competitive.

The results are borne out in our economic performance. Our GDP is leading the G7. Our GDP is leading the Canadian provinces, leading Canada. That's a statement to how the work that has been done over the years to invest in the future of our economy is bearing fruit.

We're investing in seniors through our Aging with Confidence strategy. I have a community with a large number of seniors, and this is resonating well. We've invested in health care; we're investing in education. We're making a difference for the people of Ontario.

We've been working hard to do that. We've proposed a bill that would do that. It's a shame that the opposition is trying to delay it and get in the way. Let's get the results for the people of Ontario. That's why I was elected. That's why they were elected. It's time to get this bill passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Madame Lalonde has moved government notice of motion number 43 relating to the allocation of time on Bill 177, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I've just been handed a deferral slip.

"To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly:

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on government notice of motion number 43 be deferred until deferred votes on Wednesday, November 29, 2017."

Vote deferred.

1600

SAFER ONTARIO ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017

POUR PLUS DE SÉCURITÉ EN ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 27, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 175, An Act to implement measures with respect to policing, coroners and forensic laboratories and to enact, amend or repeal certain other statutes and revoke a regulation / Projet de loi 175, Loi mettant en oeuvre des mesures concernant les services policiers, les coroners et les laboratoires médico-légaux et édictant, modifiant ou abrogeant certaines autres lois et abrogeant un règlement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker, and good afternoon, again.

The first time I was locked up by the police, I got nabbed for sitting on a flat rooftop, one storey high, watching a ball game on a military base on the shores of Hudson Bay in Fort Churchill, Manitoba. I was 9, maybe 10 years old, maybe in grade 3 or grade 4. There were a number of us kids just hanging out. I guess it must have been a nice, sunny day, a sunny afternoon, hanging out together watching a ball game.

The military police—we knew them as "meatheads"; that must have been an affectionate term bestowed upon them by the military and civilian personnel much older than ourselves. Anyway, the meatheads swept in. They hauled our scrawny butts down to the lock-up. Our parents were called, and they were not amused—not at us, probably too young to even be called juvenile delinquents; our parents were not impressed with the MPs, who could just as easily have told us to climb down and be on our way.

I was expecting to be walloped, maybe with my dad's five-inch-wide web belt. That was always the threat, Speaker, normally from my mother: "Behave, or I'll take your dad's web belt to you." That very threat was always enough to grab my attention and smarten me up. As I sat in the lock-up waiting for my dad, I could already imagine the sting to come on my rear end. But Dad—good old Dad—signed me out, promised the MPs that they'd never see me again, and ushered me out the door. He never said a word.

When we got home, my mother asked what trouble I was in, and my dad said, "None." She said, "But he was locked up," and Dad said, "He was watching a ball game, Mother. Some officer's wife must have complained, or it never would have happened."

Fast-forward to Windsor, in maybe 1982. I'm at the mall. I have my four-year-old son with me. I see my friend Gord. Gord's a motorcycle cop. I tell my son, "Be good, or this guy will lock you up." My son's eyes look up, way up, to Gord's face, and his eyes seem to open wider. Gord smiles and says, "Actually, a better introduc-

tion could be, ‘If you’re ever in trouble, this man will help you out. He’s a policeman, and he’s your friend.’”

Speaker, maybe I was scarred in childhood by being locked up for sitting on a rooftop watching a ball game. I mean, perhaps we could have fallen 10 feet or so and maybe hurt ourselves, I guess. Or we could have been told just to climb down and go home. But my first police interaction perhaps led me to warn my son about being locked up, as opposed to seeing the police as our friend and someone to go to for help.

Today, in Ontario, many of us have differing views about policing and police officers, and this proposed legislation. In some communities or neighbourhoods, we trust the cops, respect them and have no fear of them; in others, not so much. Our real-life experiences, our daily interactions, shape our reactions. Our perceptions do become our realities. Our opinions get formed from our first contact and from our ongoing relationship with the police.

Some of us who respect the police have still seen incidents which cast a shadow over policing and the rules which govern discipline of officers who have embarrassed their fellow officers. Certainly, there have been enough news stories about troubling encounters between the police and members of ethnic minorities, or the disadvantaged, or those a little different than others. I recall one such incident not that long ago here in Toronto when a senior officer mocked a young woman with Down syndrome.

This proposed bill, to a great degree, comes to us because of public outrage at the way some individual officers have acted. It could have been through language; it may have been with physical force; it could have been because of systemic racism. Public outrage is a powerful tool.

I can think of a former officer in Windsor. She was off-duty. She went shopping with family members in Detroit. She came back across the border and failed to declare 102 cans of beer, 10 litres of wine and two bottles of rum. She was charged, placed on suspension with pay, and her case took five years to be adjudicated. She was paid \$400,000 while suspended. That is the sort of thing that can shape the opinions of taxpayers towards all officers, and it isn’t fair. It isn’t fair to blemish those other men and women in blue who keep us safe, who work by the rules and who uphold the highest standards of policing.

It’s also the type of publicity which has led to some of the proposed changes in this legislation. Some of it is good: Police chiefs will now be able to stop the pay of and suspend off-duty officers charged with a serious crime. Of course, nobody yet knows what constitutes a serious crime. In this bill, we don’t know. We were told that this will come later, in the regulation stage. That gives some of us pause. Maybe we’d like to support the bill, or maybe we’d like to support it with more enthusiasm, but we simply don’t trust the Liberal government enough to come up with an acceptable definition of “serious” without us having some debate about it.

I was reading something the other day—I think it was in the *Globe and Mail*—and the story quoted Mike McCormack. You know him; he’s the president of the Toronto Police Association. He says, “The province needs a clear definition of a serious crime outside of duty.” He holds the opinion that without it, these changes don’t “give the chiefs a sweeping power to suspend without pay at all.”

There’s also a provision in here that would clearly define the roles and responsibilities of a sworn officer. These would set clear parameters and supposedly identify where it may be appropriate to use non-police personnel. But, again, they’re not all in here yet. And some of us see that as a slippery slope to privatization of core police duties, and that’s an issue.

It’s an issue for people such as Bruce Chapman. You know him, Speaker. He’s the president of the Police Association of Ontario. He’s been quoted as saying, “There is no place for private policing in Ontario, it is nothing more than policing for profit.”

1610

Now, to be fair, that’s not the way that Minister Lalonde sees Bill 175. She introduced second reading back on November 15. Knowing it could be seen by some as a side road to privatization, she tried to head it off at the pass. The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services said in Hansard that the plan is to use “alternative service providers like special constables to provide non-critical services where a threat to public safety does not exist.” She said that they can do that already in forensic support, crisis negotiation and crime analysis. So there will be an expansion from those areas, but, she says, not towards for-profit corporations unless it’s in a highly limited circumstance, whatever that is. We don’t know for certain. You can’t read it in here. It could include a highly specialized area “where expertise may not exist” currently “within any police service in the province.”

That begs the question, why are we thinking of contracting out a job for which there is no job yet? It doesn’t exist, so why are we even thinking about contracting out the possibility of filling it? What’s behind the motivation here? On the one hand, the minister is saying that “we’re also taking the necessary steps to ensure a consistent approach to policing across the province.”

“The proposed legislation will establish consistent education, training and standards for all police services. Ontario’s 3,115 special constables will also be subject to enhanced education and training.... By finding appropriate alternative service delivery methods, we will help our police officers perform their jobs even more effectively.”

But on the other hand, Speaker, the minister is saying in Hansard, “Ontario is not a one-size-fits-all province. We are a collection of large urban centres, rural communities and indigenous communities. For example, a community that is vulnerable to human trafficking has a different set of priorities and a different expectation of support from the province than one that is combatting an increase in opioid addiction and overdoses. It would be

impossible to build a single model for policing that would be appropriate for a province as vast and diverse as Ontario."

Policing needs and requirements vary across the province, but there is one thing I believe we can all agree on: It's one of the safest jurisdictions in North America. The minister, in opening this debate, reminded us that, since 2007, our crime rate has dropped by 29% and our rate of violent crime has dropped by 27%. That, to me, says a lot about the way we have been doing policing, which makes some people wonder, me included, with those types of results, why are we even thinking about contracting out some of the way we do our policing already?

I know that the police officers with whom I had this discussion have some very grave concerns about many aspects of this proposed legislation. Section 11 allows police services boards to jettison the enforcement of local bylaws as a responsibility. The municipality can then have anyone it likes enforce these provisions.

Section 12, according to the Police Association of Ontario, allows the government to take a specific service or services out of the hands of municipalities and hand it to a private contractor, so long as the regulation supports it. We don't know what the regulation will say. The regulation will come at some undefined point in the future. It's certainly not in this act.

The next one, section 13, as seen by the PAO, has a possibility, when the regulations are passed, that would enable the municipality to use non-employees to provide core services—non-employees to provide core services.

Another scary possibility resides in section 14. According to the Police Association of Ontario, it allows for the specific contracting out to for-profit or non-profit third parties without regard to the employees being replaced or their collectively bargained rights. They have a contract, it's been collectively bargained, but there's no regard for it if the regulation goes forward. At some point, it says, they can do whatever the heck they want.

Summarizing some of the PAO's fears, it is fair to say that this bill opens the door to widespread privatization of policing services, where government could contract out entire policing functions on a province-wide basis with no consideration to local needs or local collective agreements.

Now, AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, has a document that says Ontario pays more per capita than any other province for policing: \$347 for each of us—every man, woman and child—and the Canadian average is \$319; so \$347 in Ontario and \$319 is the Canadian average.

But I know in Windsor I've heard our chief say in the past that we, being on the border, do a good deal of work that would normally be done by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or the Ontario Provincial Police in other jurisdictions more inland from the border. As I recall, although we do those jobs that fall under the duties and responsibilities of higher services, we don't get paid for them. At the very least, we don't get paid for every dime

that we spend doing jobs that otherwise would be done by the Mounties or the OPP.

Bill 175 is the first update in 20 years to the way we police Ontario. Times have changed and, as the president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association, Rob Jamieson, has said, the nature of policing has changed over those 20 years as well.

There are, Speaker, some good points in this bill; for example, having extensive training for the men and women who get appointed to serve on the local police boards across Ontario; sensitivity training so they can better understand the cultural differences, the dos and don'ts of the communities they serve. This training could be enhanced—but this act doesn't mandate that—if the training to board members also included tutorials on police governance matters through the police college.

It's also important that members of the community see themselves reflected among the faces of those who are appointed to the police commissions. A major consideration has to come through financial improvements. There's no money in here. Police departments can't do their job without adequate resources. The oversight bodies, these independent authorities, won't be able to do their jobs adequately without being financially resourced as well.

It's good to see so many improvements being available to the First Nations policing communities. They will benefit from having their own police boards.

I guess there may be several bottom lines in this multi-layered bill. After all, Speaker, as you very well know, it's more than 400 pages in length; it takes a while to sift through everything. One of them would be, one would hope, contained in the details that are lacking. Maybe in the bottom line there will be details in there somewhere; the details that are promised to come in regulation, but nobody knows yet what they are.

The definitions are yet to be written. The boundaries are yet to be set. What are the exact core functions of a sworn police officer? Will any of those be watered down so they can be contracted out? Why isn't this government being upfront with us and the police community and providing this information? What is being hidden from us, and why? Why is it being hidden? Pick a cliché out of the air: The devil is in the details. The proof is in the pudding. Go ahead. Have a go at it.

1620

How much will these so-called updates in this bill cost, and who is expected to pay for them? Will it be the province or, more likely, the municipal tax base?

I look forward to learning more about what's really hidden away in these 417 pages in Bill 175. I look forward to hearing more debate, and at this stage I'm left wondering if the pros in the bill outweigh the cons.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm very pleased to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 175, the Safer Ontario Act, and to respond to the member for Windsor—Tecumseh. As always, he is a consummate speaker. He entertained us at

the start with a story about being a young child and getting into trouble at age nine. I'm very happy to hear that his story had a happy ending after his brush with the law.

I want to address a certain point that he made about suspending police officers without pay if they are under investigation. I share this with you—this story came to me from our chief of police in Waterloo region. There was a case of a local police officer who was suspended. He was facing a serious charge, and while he was waiting for his trial to come up for three years—it was way too long; it should have happened sooner. But in that three-year term he wrote a letter to the chief and he thanked him for the paycheque he was getting while he was essentially, as he put it, "on vacation." He bragged about being able to travel. He was building a deck in his backyard. You can imagine how frustrating this was for the chief. He ended up sharing the letter at a public municipal meeting, and he also took it to the media. He wanted people to know about his frustration and how the Ontario government needed to address this loophole.

So the provisions in Bill 175 are welcome in my community in Waterloo region. They will allow suspension without pay when police officers in question are charged with a serious federal offence; the alleged offence was not committed in relation to the performance of their duties—this is included; the likely outcome is termination; and not suspending the officer would discredit the reputation of the police service.

This is a really important issue our government is addressing, and we work with our partners to modernize policing in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to make comment on the member from Windsor-Tecumseh on Bill 175, the Safer Ontario Act. This bill was brought in I think two weeks ago, maybe three now—just two. It's 400-and-some pages, so it's very hard to speak in a short period of time. The member for Windsor-Tecumseh did a great job on such a large amount of content in the bill. He certainly brought in some very good questions.

First of all, the police were quite upset that they weren't consulted enough on the final draft that came forward as a bill with the government. In fact, they felt that they were actually under attack. It's very hard to be a police officer. You need to be seen and respected in the public, and the government's bill, in its present form, certainly casts doubt on the police and their ability to do their job, and that is not right. We don't agree with that on this side of the Legislature.

The member brought up outsourcing. What are they going to outsource? As he rightly said, a lot of this bill is in regulation, so we don't know all the details yet. Basically, they come later after a bill is passed. It's the definitions of core policing: What are the core functions of policing? What is it that's going to be outsourced? What oversight is there to what is outsourced?

They've built in oversight of policing here, which came from Justice Tulloch's report, which isn't opposed.

The police associations want oversight, but if the government, on one hand, is going to outsource but not do oversight of the outsourcing—we don't know what's going to be outsourced because they haven't defined core functions of policing.

So lots of questions yet to be answered. We look forward to the government's answers and maybe some amendments on this bill.

I thank the member from Windsor-Tecumseh.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to offer some comments on the speech from my colleague the member for Windsor-Tecumseh with regard to Bill 175, the Safer Ontario Act. I think the member did an excellent job of looking at some of the pros and the cons of this legislation. I wanted to comment a bit further about one of the red flags that he raised, and that is regarding the contracting out—essentially the privatization—of police services. This legislation clearly opens the door to enable that to happen.

You know, Speaker, I find it interesting. I'm wondering if perhaps the Liberals have been listening to their constituents who have been raising concerns about the privatization of Hydro One with no advance notice whatsoever given to the citizens of this province. We have seen recently in a couple of pieces of legislation—Bill 160, which opens the door to the privatization of health services, and this bill, which opens the door to the privatization of police services—that maybe the Liberals are developing some new-found transparency. They're trying to be a little bit more upfront about their privatization agenda.

Unfortunately, what we see in both Bill 160, about the privatization of health care, and this bill, about the privatization of policing, is that this transparency is buried within extremely complex pieces of legislation, which then become time-allocated and rushed through debate so that there is no legitimate opportunity for people in this province to comment on these privatization plans.

I think that this member has done an excellent job of pointing out some of the places where we have to be very concerned as we move forward with this modernization of the Police Services Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: It's certainly a pleasure for me to rise this afternoon and speak to Bill 175. I can tell you that this is a large piece of legislation but a necessary piece of legislation, given the fact that the Police Services Act of 1990 was in need of upgrades and updating. This is the largest transformation of policing that we're going to be seeing in a generation.

I can tell you that back in 1994, when I was first elected as mayor of the wonderful town of Alexandria, I had the privilege of sitting on the police services board for the local community. I was able to gain considerable insight over the three years on how policing operations

work. I can tell you that policing back then, in the 1990s, a generation ago, was not the same as it is these days, and that's why it is necessary to move forward with this.

What has changed? The complexity of crime has changed. There's e-crime now online. There's fraud. We have civil liberties and human rights issues that are more prevalent now. Issues relating to civil liberties and human rights are increasingly prominent and have led to strained relationships between police and marginalized communities and populations.

What I've seen in my community specifically is that the way policing was done and the way it has to be done in the future are not the same, especially with the number of, I would say, domestic incidents and mental health issues that are prevalent, and people who are in distress. We need to make sure that our officers and our first responders are trained accordingly.

This is a fundamental step in moving forward. I support it, and I'm hoping that everyone in this House will support the great work that the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the Honourable Marie-France Lalonde, has done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for a final comment.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I thank the member from Kitchener Centre, and the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock for reminding us that the police associations' various members across the province felt that they weren't consulted enough when the Liberals were preparing this bill. There's so much in regulation, as she reminded us. There are no definitions. There's so much to come.

This contracting-out possibility is a huge issue for the front-line officers. My good friend and colleague from London West knows and accepts that the door has been opened for the privatization of core services of policing. The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell called this a "necessary piece of legislation" because when he was the mayor back in 1994 in Alexandria, he spent three years on the police commission, and he says that policing has changed. It's become tougher, more complex. But what he didn't say was why the Liberals feel the need to contract out core services at a time when policing is becoming more complex.

1630

I'll also say this to you, Speaker: There are communities where, when they see the police car roll up—it could be visible minority communities or whatever—they're not ready to accept the police. They don't really trust them. If they don't trust our sworn officers today, how much trust will they put in the security guards who roll into their playgrounds, into their neighbourhoods, when they don't trust the cops that are there now, sworn officers who are trained? How much trust are they going to give to the security guards who roll up after this legislation goes through, the regulations come in and they contract out core, sworn police duty services?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today and speak to Bill 175, Safer Ontario Act. I want you to know that I'll be sharing my time with the member from Brampton–Springdale, the MPP for St. Catharines and also the MPP for Kingston and the Islands.

The Safer Ontario Act is a comprehensive public safety legislation package that, if passed, would represent the largest policing transformation in a generation. The question is, why make this change? Well, the nature of policing and community safety has changed significantly since the Police Services Act was first introduced in 1990. The issues faced by police services and their members today are far more complex than when the act was developed. Crime has become increasingly complex and global in its nature with the rapid acceleration of technology, and increased interactions with vulnerable individuals have called for more effective tools and systems to enhance police response and better support vulnerable individuals.

We recognize that these new realities require a transformation of our policing and community safety services delivery network. The Strategy for a Safer Ontario acknowledges the significance of this new reality and addresses the challenges it is presenting.

So here's what we're doing. Our government is working to build safer, stronger communities across the province by modernizing the current policing framework to make it community-focused, accountable, sustainable and culturally responsive. The proposed legislation would introduce a new Police Services Act which would modernize Ontario's policing framework by:

- shifting to a collaborative approach to community safety and well-being planning to help municipalities lead partnerships that would provide collaborative solutions to local needs;

- outlining police responsibilities and community safety service delivery. This will clarify fundamental police responsibilities and ensure Ontario's highly trained police officers focus on core community safety issues;

- also, it will enhance police accountability to the public by creating a new police inspector general with a mandate to oversee and monitor police services and police services boards to ensure the delivery of adequate and effective policing;

- strengthen the police oversight system by expanding and clarifying the mandates of the three oversight bodies, establishing strong penalties for officers who do not comply with investigations, setting strict timelines for investigations and police reporting, and releasing more information about the results of investigations and disciplinary hearings by oversight agencies; and finally

- by supporting the sustainability of First Nations policing by enabling First Nations to choose their policing service delivery mode, including the option to come under the same legislative framework as the rest of Ontario, and ensuring First Nations communities receive sustainable, equitable and culturally responsive delivery of police services.

This is so important. Most of these points here have been spoken about on many different levels by many people in the community, and there has been much support for these changes.

The proposed legislation would also improve Ontario's inquest system through changes to the Coroners Act; create a provincial accreditation framework for forensic laboratories to ensure consistent standards; and assist police in responding to missing persons occurrences where there is no evidence of criminal activity under the new Missing Persons Act.

Speaker, I'd like to just take a few minutes to talk about the missing persons piece. We all know that swift action is absolutely critical when a loved one goes missing. Currently, when there is no evidence a crime has been committed, police cannot obtain the judicial orders that allow access to the type of essential information or powers that may locate a missing person. Just think about that: They need to be able to do that fast, and they can't get it fast enough. Information such as mobile phone records and banking data—this kind of information can be critical to finding someone. This places missing persons at unnecessary risk.

Our police services must be given the tools and supports they need to effectively and rapidly resolve missing persons cases and return a missing loved one to their family. That's why our government is supporting police across the province when it comes to locating missing persons with Ontario's first Missing Persons Act. The Missing Persons Act would remove barriers by giving courts the power to grant judicial orders to police to access personal information and enter a premises for the purpose of searching for a missing person. Just think about that, and think about how important that would be for locating someone.

Finally, this act will, for example, assist with our efforts to combat human trafficking and locate indigenous women at risk of violence.

Speaker, I could go on about so many of the different pieces, but I do want to say that this piece of legislation, Bill 175, the Safer Ontario Act, is extremely important. If passed, these legislative changes would bring about a radically new policing framework. We would be able to better respond to today's challenges and ensure the long-term sustainability of these services well into the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing debate, I recognize the member from Brampton-Springdale.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I'm proud to stand today to support the government's Safer Ontario Act. It's very important for all of us, when we raise our families, when we settle somewhere, to be living in a safe province and to be living in safe communities. This is exactly the type of legislation that we need in order to modernize our communities, to ensure that we are meeting their current needs.

Things have changed quite a bit since the early 1990s, when the Police Services Act was brought into effect, and we need to ensure that we are—especially coming

from growth communities, like mine. In Brampton we, like I've said many times in this Legislature, are the ninth-largest growing city in the country, and this is why we need to focus on services that are changing. Every community has changing needs. We need to be able to deliver for those needs.

That's exactly what this act is going to be able to do because of the Ontario policing framework—by shifting to a collaborative approach to community safety and well-being planning to help municipalities lead partnerships that would provide collaborative solutions to local needs.

I really think that the importance being emphasized here on local needs is so very different, because every community in Ontario will have different needs. Every community has a different demographic and has different types of community safety issues that they will need to work on.

While there were consultations going on throughout the province, I had an opportunity to go to a number of meetings within the Peel region. Peel Regional Police have hosted numerous town halls to talk about what the community wants. After hearing what the community had to say about police oversight, about policing in general and what they expect in community safety, I can say that this legislation is targeting everything that I've heard over the last couple of years when I've attended those different types of information sessions held by the Peel Regional Police or by other bodies in my community.

I know that my community will welcome the changes to the Police Services Act. They will welcome the thorough look at local needs, and I know that they will want to continue to work with the police services board.

I can say that whether it be in Peel or across Ontario, our police officers are doing a fabulous job. We have some of the best police officers in the country, and they are putting their lives on the line every day to provide a safe community.

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This will only help and build on what they do every day to ensure that our community only becomes safer and a better place for all Ontarians. We want to ensure that we're enhancing accountability, and police accountability as well. That's important to our residents. There should be public confidence within our system, and we want to ensure that public confidence continues to grow and they feel comfortable, they understand what the Police Services Act is, they are able to provide their input, they're able to work with their local boards and provide more local governance, and citizen governance, in this case. That's why this is a little bit more about what this act actually reflects, what this legislation is going to reflect, and what it means to our communities.

As we look at some of the issues, I want to say that the proposed changes are part of the government's landmark legislation for a safer Ontario. Everything we do here as legislators is important. We always think about what the community needs are and what the community wants.

This is putting the safety needs of our community first. I look forward to seeing the impacts of this legislation in Brampton. As a growing city, we've seen our growing needs, and we are looking forward to the new changes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing along with shared debate, I recognize the member from St. Catharines.

Mr. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much for that kind and mercifully brief introduction.

I'm delighted to speak briefly on this particular bill, which is a major transformation of police services and policing in Ontario, in recognition, first of all, of the fact that our police officers in Ontario are considered to be amongst the best in the world. As you know, on many occasions Canada has been called upon to offer training to people in other countries of the world, particularly Third World countries, which are developing. Our police officers and police officials have gone to other countries to be able to show them what is done in Canada and what isn't done in Canada, and why it's successful. That includes our officers.

Also, when there is a citizenship court, one of the things that I've mentioned to the new citizens of Canada is that in many countries the police are to be feared and people avoid them at all instances and every circumstance, and that in Ontario and in Canada, we look upon our police services as there to protect and serve the people of our jurisdictions across this country. That's a different approach because in many countries, police are very much feared.

Over the years, we've seen changes take place in society, and there have been some changes which have naturally occurred in policing and some which are required to change through legislation and through regulations. That is what we're endeavouring to do in this particular instance. We welcome the opportunity.

As you know, with bills that go through the House, we have first reading. Normally first reading is routinely agreed to by the members of the House—the introduction—unless there's some game-playing, which all of us have been guilty of at one time or another, no doubt, on first reading. Second reading is when we get into the debate in principle. In principle, I think most members of this House are going to find some good things in this particular legislation. There may be some quibbles or quarrels over certain parts of the legislation, and that's very understandable. That is why we go to committee.

At committee of the Ontario Legislature—and I must say, that's something that our government has wanted to ensure happens as much as possible. That wasn't always the case. I won't go back to the years from 1995 to 2003 when often there was not committee. I'll forget about that particular era, as you probably have forgotten, Mr. Speaker, about that era. But now we tend to go to committee and we have representations made by all who have an opinion.

It's not a consensus that develops, necessarily, with a bill of this kind. There are going to be people who are going to take a fairly extreme position on one side or

other, and that's certainly fine in our democracy. But ultimately, government must come up with that compromise which makes certain that the legislation we present is going to benefit the province. We are certainly endeavouring to do that through this bill.

So we welcome, for instance, representatives from the policing community out there who are on the front line of delivering the services. We can count upon them to go to committee to make their representations. We can have those who are civil libertarians, who have seen problems that exist over the years and want to appear before the committee. In other words, a variety of people will appear before committee to make representations and make recommendations to our committee. Then, at that time, there's an opportunity for amendments to be made, if indeed amendments are going to improve the bill. From time to time, those amendments are accepted and the bill is improved, so we look forward to that.

Then we go to third reading after it clears committee. There are votes on the amendments. The amendments are carefully thought about before they come forward to an actual vote, and people recall what those who have come to the committee and represented their position have said. So I look forward to that.

We have, I think, a variety of circumstances where we have police boards in Ontario—some function exceedingly well; some have more challenges that they have to deal with from day to day. I know that we will hear from those across the province. But we're trying to shift to a collaborative approach to community safety and well-being. We're outlining the police responsibilities in community service delivery, we're enhancing police accountability, we're strengthening the police oversight system and we're supporting the sustainability of First Nations policing, all enviable goals.

I know that my colleague from Kingston and the Islands will want to elaborate further, and so I will be yielding the floor to the member for Kingston and the Islands, if you deem that to be appropriate, sitting in the chair.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing in the spirit of shared debate, I now turn it over to the member from Kingston and the Islands.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to thank my colleagues for their thoughts on this bill, Bill 175.

I'd also like to acknowledge just for a moment, as well, the fact that we had our police officers here, our police associations, just last week. There were quite a number of members from Kingston and the Islands who were here. I was delighted to see them.

I would like to acknowledge, as well, our police chief, Chief Laroche, in Kingston; the deputy chief, Antje McNeely; and Cam Gough, the president of the police association, who came to spend the time here and talk with various members about some of the things that they were concerned about and working on within our community. A big shout-out as well to Andrea Risk and the police services board. It's important that we acknowledge that our police services boards are volunteer organ-

izations. They do spend an awfully long time working on keeping our communities safer, and I want to acknowledge their efforts as well.

Specifically with respect to Bill 175, I want to talk a little bit more about the specific issue of First Nations policing and just make some comments about the type of collaboration and engagement that we have had with First Nations communities. We have also been consulting and having conversations with provincial territorial organizations and indigenous police services themselves all across the province. This has been through a very comprehensive process which was led by the Chiefs of Ontario, and the Nishnawbe Aski Nation as well.

We've worked closely with First Nations to support this process and incorporate engagement findings into a transformative framework for First Nations policing. This is in addition to our long-standing engagement with First Nations Chiefs of Police, who have contributed their operational expertise and communities' perspectives to support the development of the proposed legislation.

The new Police Services Act will introduce a framework that provides First Nations communities with choice in determining a model of policing that fits with their needs. Now, this is really revolutionary. I'm very, very proud, being the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, that we have this piece within this legislation. It's very important. It's the very first time that First Nations will be able to actually choose whether to establish their own police services boards, and those that don't want to do that are able to continue with their current framework of policing. This means that First Nations police services boards would be required to meet the same provincial standards and oversight as those governing other police services in Ontario. This includes meeting provincial policing standards for quality and effectiveness in areas such as service delivery, training, equipment, civilian governance and oversight; ensuring they are culturally responsive and appropriate by enabling First Nations communities to have greater input in the governance and direction of their police services boards; and being subject to the same oversight as the rest of police services in Ontario.

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We will continue to work with First Nations to establish a board to develop regulations that are appropriate and responsive to their communities.

Our government has collaborated with indigenous communities, political territorial organizations, and First Nations police services for a long time, to bring forward this transformation.

These changes would ensure that First Nations receive culturally responsive, sustainable, accountable and equitable policing that has the flexibility—and that's what I love about this piece—to address specific community needs on their own terms.

This is something that the member from Brampton-Springdale brought up, and I wanted to acknowledge her for that as well. It is very, very important to address those

very particular community needs that we have, and they are all different. We need to make sure that we're focused on that.

I'd like to thank you all for listening and for participating in this debate. Thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to rise in debate today for Bill 175, Safer Ontario Act, 2017.

Obviously, this has a lot to do with community policing and is an overhaul of the Police Services Act—the first major one in 20 years.

I just wanted to point out that I've grown up as an admirer of the police forces here in Canada. My father, the late Danny MacLeod, was the police commissioner in our town of New Glasgow, Nova Scotia. His small police force of 26 actually prompted him to become a leader in the Canadian Association of Police Boards, being a long-time president and a life member as long as he was alive. He used to come to Toronto and Niagara Falls, and he would always get a big kick out of his small police force of 26 and then all of these large police forces, much larger than his. He worked with Herb Kreling of the city of Ottawa, and Norm Gardner here in the city of Toronto back then. They had these major police forces.

My deepest gratitude and my thanks to the police forces here in this province and across the country for the work they do.

You know something, Speaker? My father taught me, and I have in turn, with my husband, taught my daughter, to always thank any serving officer or any person who is in uniform who protects us on the front lines.

That said, we do understand in the Progressive Conservative caucus that there are a few problems with Bill 175. The bill does not define the core functions of police officers versus those that can be outsourced. The three major Ontario police unions have each raised concerns and objections that it opens the door to privatization, via outsourcing, of core duties normally carried out by police.

Secondly, the bill expands the bureaucracy associated with police oversight, without a commensurate announcement of additional resources.

Third, the bill overall implies a distrust of police officers and the work that they do. I wholeheartedly reject that, Speaker, as the police officers that I know in the city of Ottawa and across this country do great work for us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm happy to add to the debate. I had an hour to talk about the bill yesterday. It's an incredibly exhaustive bill; it's 407 pages long. It was a couple of years in the making. It is incredibly complex. It leaves a lot to regulation.

It has some functions that I think were a long time in the making and have been anticipated by folks in civil rights organizations, a lot of folks who were looking for a greater level of transparency, oversight and accountabil-

ity within our police forces. These are all things that I think you could expect in a reform of a bill that hasn't been updated in 20 years.

I would agree with the general consensus that the nature of policing and the nature of criminality in our province and across the country have changed and evolved, and we have to ensure that our laws reflect that.

However, all of this is for naught. All of the great stuff that is in that bill is for naught if we erode and degrade the quality and professionalism and level of service that we have come to expect with our professional police forces.

That is a real concern that is built into this bill with its provisions to privatize essential core services of our police. If we are to degrade the service or to lower the level of service by outsourcing vital components to for-profit private entities that are concerned with making a profit rather than those who are charged with the duty to protect us, it makes and will make our communities vulnerable. I hope the Liberals pay attention to those very serious concerns.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Han Dong: Good afternoon, Speaker. It's my pleasure to lend my voice to this bill, Bill 175, the Safer Ontario Act. The Safer Ontario Act is a comprehensive public safety legislation package that, if passed, would represent the largest policing transformation in a generation.

The nature of policing and community safety has changed significantly since the Police Services Act was first introduced in 1990. The issues faced by police services and their members today are far more complex than when the act was first developed. Police are increasingly responding to complex social calls where a first responder may not always need to be a police officer, for example, in interactions with a person with mental health distress. In fact, I was participating in a local ride-along program with the local police sergeant. It was an eye-opener for me. He told me that 40% of their calls have to do with a person who's dealing with mental health issues or addiction problems.

You can see that it's getting more and more complex, and on this side we recognize that the new reality requires a transformation of our policing and community safety services delivery framework. The Strategy for a Safer Ontario acknowledges the significance of this new reality and addresses the challenge it is presenting.

If passed, these legislative changes would bring about a new policing framework. We would be able to better respond to today's challenges and ensure the long-term sustainability of these services into the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to make comment on the four Liberal members who spoke to their 20-minute rotation on Bill 175, the Safer Ontario Act, 2017. I had risen earlier today to share some concerns that I've heard, and not just from the police associations themselves,

about what is left to regulatory framework after the bill is passed: those definitions of core functions, the outsourcing and the fact that the police were quite upset that they were not consulted towards the final bill that was brought before us in the Legislature. I want to read a couple of comments.

One is from Luke from Durham, who wrote in about the bill. He says, "I am highly concerned about contracting out parts of policing. Police officers do an incredible job and are beyond an essential service. This area of public service is not where we should be looking to cut costs." He speaks about—and I mentioned earlier too—the contracting out and where's the accountability on what you do contract out, when we ever get the definitions of what they might contract out, which is always harder.

But he said, "Where is there accountability for someone working in the private sector?" That is a question we've been asking here. "If they are not police officers, will they fall under the Safer Ontario Act? From what I can see, no. This is extremely troubling and I feel like the 'customer service' will be much like that of any other company in today's climate—poor." That's Luke from Durham raising his concern about what is not in the bill and why they are not disclosing.

They want transparency. We all agree with transparency. We agree with oversight. We're just saying that if you can't define core functions and what they might be outsourcing, that's a big problem. It doesn't meet the transparency rules on this side.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from St. Catharines for final comment.

Mr. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much for the contribution each member made, the questions asked and the concerns expressed by members as a result of the speeches by the members of the government on this particular bill. They will recognize that at committee there's an opportunity for people to make representations. We always—as I always do—encourage people who have a view on a bill of this kind or any kind to make an appointment to appear before committee or, if not appear before the committee, at least submit in writing information to the committee that they believe would be relevant to the final disposition of amendments that might be coming forward. We do encourage that very much.

It's interesting that when some members of the Legislature go to AMO and they hear from their local mayors, they are nodding acquiescently as the local mayors are looking for ways to save money, and they agree with the local mayors. Then when it comes to governments bringing in ways to save money, the same people who nodded to the local mayor, shook hands and patted them on the back, decide that once something comes before the Legislature, they're going to change their view on that. I simply put that out there as something that is put forward by local municipalities and has the support of members of Legislature—and then that changes after that.

We look forward to the debate in this House. I always listen very carefully. I think the member for Welland is going to be speaking. I'm going to be listening very carefully to her speech, and by other members from the opposition and the government. Ultimately, I do encourage people to make their submissions to committee to strengthen a bill which seems to have a lot of support in the House, with some exceptions that have been enunciated by members who have stood in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and one-half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

I recognize the minister.

Hon. Michael Coteau: We wish debate to continue, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The debate will continue.

Further debate? I recognize the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. For a moment there, I was concerned that I might be down to 10 minutes, but I think it's after seven hours that we go down to 10 minutes or something like that.

First of all, I'm pleased to join this debate on Bill 175, which would be, in this day and age, probably as thick as the Toronto phone book. Originally the government talked about how they wanted to get this bill through the House before Christmas. I believe they're rethinking that position, because it hasn't gone as smoothly as they would have liked. The member from St. Catharines talked about coming to committee and looking for some refinements or changes or improvements. Well, sometimes maybe you should have those conversations before you write the bill in the first place. You might have a better chance of getting things right right off the bat, as they say.

I'm not the senior member of this Legislature by any means, and I'm certainly not the oldest, but I've been around for a few years. Policing has changed an awful lot.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The second-longest-serving member in eastern Ontario.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes.

I remember back in grade school when we used to get periodic visits from the community service officer. I don't know if they called them that at that time, but I remember Constable Bruce McArthur—a fine gentleman. He died of a heart attack a number of years ago. He used to come into the schools. To the point my friend from Windsor—Tecumseh was talking about: He was ensuring that people understood that, "I'm a police officer. I'm your friend. I'm here to help. I want you to understand a little bit more—you kids in school here—just what we do for a living, and how important the impact that our lives

have on yours, but also how important your lives are to us." He helped us understand even then—and it's one thing that hasn't changed at all—that the police can't do their job without the public.

That's a very important part of this bill, or perhaps I should say, it's something that maybe has been forgotten in this bill.

They're calling the short title the Safer Ontario Act, but so many of the things in this bill are about what the government sees as ways we've got to protect the people from the police.

For the life of me, I can't understand how handcuffing the police before they go out to do their job is going to make Ontario safer, but we're seeing an awful lot of that in this bill. It's a question of trust. One of the most important things that a police officer knows when they set out on their journey at the start of the day is that the people they are protecting, and have sworn to protect, trust the police to do their job.

This is not a perfect world, Speaker. This is not a world made of perfect people. This is a world made of humans, very fallible humans. Yes, in every walk of life, in every profession, there will be instances when people fail, and when people fail to even uphold their sworn duty.

However, that does not mean that we should in any way try to drive the public to a place where they trust our police less. It is of absolute paramount importance that we believe in and trust our police.

I remember, when I was about 12 years old or so, a buddy of mine and I were scooting around on our bicycles. We were down by the railroad tracks, and we noticed on this boxcar that one of the doors was not closed quite right. So we climbed into that boxcar. It was a freight boxcar. We don't have a train going through Barry's Bay anymore, as it is with many towns.

We climbed into that boxcar and we found, I'm going to suggest, maybe 20 or 25 cases—not cartons, but cases—of cigarettes. There had been recent burglaries in the community—there were break-ins in the food stores; there were break-ins in other areas—and we found these literally cases of cigarettes. I'm not talking about a carton of 10 packs or whatever it is now, but cases that would hold probably 10 or 12 cartons of cigarettes.

Well, we thought about it. I'll be honest with you, Speaker. We thought about maybe snatching a few of those for ourselves. But we thought, "Boy, this is bigger than anything we've ever seen." So we went home. My dad was home, and I said, "What are we going to do?" He said, "Well, we've got to call the police." So we called the police, and they came in and questioned me and my buddy. They had to do exactly what they did; they did their job. But we were made to feel very comfortable during that interrogation, if you want to call it that.

To be fair, my dad was there at the time too, because they asked if he wanted to be present. He said, "Well, certainly. I mean, they're just kids." I think it's appropriate that he would be present.

But we also believed that the police would do what was necessary to deal with that situation, and of course, they did.

As I said, policing has changed an awful lot. At that time, in the 1960s, there were no females in the police department. You had to be male to be a police officer. There were also height and weight restrictions. If I recall, you had to be a minimum of 5 foot 9 and a minimum of I think it was 165 pounds to be a police officer.

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Of course, things have changed so much over the years, and the face of Ontario has changed. They recognized, first of all, that it was not only wrong, but foolish not to allow persons of all genders to be members of police departments, which they are today, but also that the height and weight restrictions penalized a lot of races that were smaller by nature than the average Anglo-Saxon North American. So they've changed those things. That has changed policing for the better because today our police force reflects more who we are in society, and that's exactly the way it should be.

Our police officers are the front line. They leave their homes each and every day they're on the job, they're on a shift, knowing that at any given time, they could be in a life-or-death situation, and we are thankful for that. As my friend from Windsor-Tecumseh said, we live in a very safe society. Relative to other societies, Ontario and Canada in general are extremely safe societies. We can take a lot of credit for that from the democracy that we have built and upheld, the democracy that our fathers and grandfathers have fought for in world wars. We also can take an awful lot of comfort in that we have police forces and a law-and-order system in this country that leads to a protective society, leads to one where we feel comfortable, when we walk out that door, that we're walking down safe streets and we're walking in safe communities. Our police give us that sense of comfort and that sense of safety.

So it's not surprising that some of the reaction by the police themselves to this new bill has been quite negative, because a lot of the provisions in the bill are basically saying, "We, the Liberal government of Ontario, want to make Ontario safer by protecting the people from the police."

As I said, we don't live in a perfect world occupied by perfect people. There are mistakes that are made and there are things that are done wrong. In my conversations with the police, they want to be accountable. They understand that they have to be, just like everyone else, held accountable. They want to be held accountable. For example, there's a provision in this bill, which is something that has not been the rule in the past, that allows a police officer who is charged with a serious crime—now, we have to determine and we have to codify what constitutes that crime. That's where this government has failed again. There are so many loose ends here, so many things that have not been defined properly. If a police officer is charged with a serious crime while not on duty, then that police officer can be suspended without pay.

That is something that, in my conversations with police officers, they're quite comfortable with. They more than accept that because they want to be accountable. They want the quality of their membership to be beyond reproach. When you have probably about 25,000 or 30,000 police officers in this province, is it not entirely, absolutely certain that at some time or another, someone among those numbers is going to be in breach of the law themselves? They want to be held accountable, but they don't want to be held up and identified as the bad guys, because if we start thinking of our police in that way, how is it possible for them to do their job?

I'll tell you who is going to be very, very happy if we start to identify our police that way or allow the public to feel that we're protecting you from the police because you need protection from the police: The criminals in our society are going to be extremely happy. They will be more than happy, because one of the things that is absolutely necessary for police to solve crime is input from the public. They're not magicians. They don't have crystal balls. They don't have magic wands. When a police officer or a group of police officers or a police department is doing an investigation, they go to you, meaning you, the people on the street, the public. They seek your assistance because two eyes are better than one; 2,000 eyes are better than two. That's what they rely on: for the public to help them solve crimes to make the public more and more safe.

But this bill is putting the police right into the bull's-eye. This bill is aimed at the police officers themselves.

Hon. Michael Coteau: What's going on here? You haven't read the bill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They talk about new powers of the SIU. Here are some of the subtitles in the bill. Maybe the minister should laugh less and read the bill himself.

"Right to Report Professional Misconduct." "Discipline and Dismissal." These are the titles in the bill. "Ontario Policing Complaints Agency." "Public Complaints, Investigations and Hearings."

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: These are the conversations I have had with the very people that walk the street and protect you. You want only one side of the equation, Mr. Minister. That's the problem.

Hon. Michael Coteau: No, a balanced approach. You've never made reference to one single civilian you've spoken to. Go ahead.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Order. One speaker at a time.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, the poor minister. I guess he wants to be part of the debate. He had a chance.

Why didn't you join it?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'm next.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Are you going to attack the police? Is that what you're going to do? Like, you're implying I'm not fair.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Where did that just come from?

Mr. John Yakabuski: My goodness gracious.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): The member will speak to the Chair, and the audience will listen.

Mr. John Fraser: The heckler doesn't like being heckled.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, I have the floor, I will say to the member from Ottawa South.

They don't like when somebody disagrees with what they are doing here—because we're getting the feedback. We're getting the feedback from the very people who have sworn to put their lives on the line and protect us each and every day. They are coming back and they are saying, "Where was the consultation?" Oh, the minister did a nice job of making sure she ferried everybody into the gallery and basically told them, "Come out on the day that I present this bill and do your duty."

You know what? The police officers were there, because they believe in serving and protecting. That is what police officers do. We want to make sure they can continue to do that. But when you send police officers out to work in the morning and the first thing you do is have them under suspicion, then they can't do their job. They need to know that they are trusted. They don't need a government that wants to, in a weaselly way, say, "Listen, we're really watching the police. We're keeping an eye on the police because those are the ones we need to protect you from." That sends a terrible message to the people out there who do make this one of the safest societies all across the world.

1720

I heard early on that they were going to force this bill through. Now I'm hearing a different story, because they're getting it back. They're getting it back from law enforcement agencies all across this province and they are talking about committee. Well, this bill does need committee. There are so many components to the bill. There's an indigenous component to this bill. I hope they're not thinking of having committee hearings just in Toronto. When this bill goes to hearings, it's got to travel all across Ontario. We have municipal police forces, we have a provincial police force and we have First Nations police forces. We've got to make sure that everybody across this province has a chance to comment on this bill in their own community, not here at Queen's Park in the hallowed halls of Liberalville. No.

That's what they like to do. If they don't move closure on a bill but they do committee hearings without closure, they will often try to have all of those hearings here in Toronto. I know the member from St. Catharines said, well, they need to come here and talk to us at committee. If there had been proper consultations on this bill before this bill was ever tabled, we would be saving a lot of time.

Mr. James J. Bradley: So you don't want committee?

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, no. We would be saving a lot of time because we wouldn't have to be bringing up these issues in the Legislature here because they would have actually been dealt with. They would have sat down

with the Ontario Provincial Police, the PAO, the OPPA or the Toronto Police Association. They would have sat down with them and said, "Look, we understand"—and, yes, there are people out there who are concerned about overstepping the boundaries of police, or anywhere else. This government loves to overstep its bounds. There is concern among groups. But when you bring out a bill that automatically says the police are guilty and we'll start with that premise and work our way back from there, what are we saying to the citizens of this province? Are we saying you can't trust the police?

We have to send the exact opposite message. We have to send the message that, "You know what? We've got the best police forces in the world. You have to be able to trust them. But if something goes wrong, we will ensure that everyone involved is held accountable." Accountability: That's something maybe this Liberal government could spend some time doing. I see the minister has finally got a copy of the bill. Maybe he's actually going to have a look at it.

But if the Liberal government could commit to being accountable and accountability was the watchword, we would have had a better bill in the first place and we'd be debating it less and moving on to ensure that the changes that are necessary and in the best interests of all of Ontario would actually be made.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Questions or comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was interesting listening to my colleague about the Safer Ontario Act. Some of the personal stories he shared were quite interesting.

But coming back to the bill, I would say the number one reason that police officers come to see me is always the same. It is the number of calls they get for people having mental health issues.

I can tell you that we have this woman in Sudbury to which every single shift—the Sudbury regional police will go to her place of residence at least nine to 10 times a day. They feel like if something else is going on, it is a tough decision to make because they have already been to her place of residence a number of times, but they know full well that if they don't go while she is calling threatening to take her own life, they will be held responsible. At the same time, they know full well that they are the ones that have the least amount of tools in their tool box to provide mental health support.

That leads me to the fact that a part of the bill makes it really clear that they are trying to save costs, and the way they are trying to save costs is to open up some of the work that is presently done by police officers to the private sector. What will that mean? I don't know, Speaker, but this worries me.

If the heaviness of the caseload is too much, I think we could do a great deal of good for all by investing in better mental health supports so that our police officers could do policing work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further comments?

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's a pleasure to be here today to respond to the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—

Pembroke. I have no doubt that the member opposite cares about the people of Ontario and the police officers and wants to help to build a better Ontario, but I really don't believe that he has put the time and effort into actually digesting what's in this document. He held it up a few times and spoke about some of the pieces.

This bill comes from a few different places. We had a judge—Judge Tulloch—go across the province and speak to thousands of people right across the province and get their input. I noticed in the member's speech—maybe I'm wrong, and I'll correct my record if I am, but I didn't hear him speak about actually getting out there and talking to people.

He talked about the police officers he sat down with. I sat down with a few police officers, like an incredible gentleman from Cornwall, Ontario. He talked about some of the issues that were brought forward to me, and he brought up some of the issues that affect rural Ontario. Through the process, if there's room for change, if we need to change it, then I think that's something that we've always been open to doing.

I would invite the member—and I've done this a couple of times, in fact—to come out and talk to some people in the community. When you actually sit down with folks in the community—the member over there is smiling; I don't know if this is funny. Come out and talk to my community. Come and listen to the people of Ontario about some of the challenges that people have in the province when it comes to interaction with police officers and the accountability processes that are in place. There's room for improvement.

His perspective is a very limited perspective. He talked about his interactions with police officers. I invite him: Let's go sit down and talk to some people, and listen to people here in the province of Ontario who have contributed so much to the design of this document.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's a pleasure to rise again to speak on Bill 175, the Safer Ontario Act, and the comments made by the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, who is very passionate about how he feels about police, community safety and concerns that he has within this bill. As was mentioned, it's a very thick bill—400-and-some pages.

We did hear from the three major police associations: the Toronto Police Association, the Ontario Provincial Police Association and the Police Association of Ontario, representing the municipalities. Look, they all expressed grave concern about non-consultation, and they do feel that they're under attack, that the government has clouded their reputation among the public. That makes it hard to do their job.

Mr. James J. Bradley: The Tory mayors saying that?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I wouldn't make this up. That's what the police had said immediately after the introduction of the bill. They've been watching, and yes, we should raise concern, because we do not want a community that feels unsafe to go to the police, or where it really handicaps the police in doing their job.

The member also mentioned mental health issues. On average, 30% of police calls are mental health-related. In northern Ontario, it's even higher. That's a big change in policing from what it was 20 years ago, so we need to give the police the tools to do that. I know that the People's Guarantee, which the PC Party launched this weekend, puts an unprecedented—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Hear, hear.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes—an unprecedented investment into mental health of \$1.9 billion. That is needed in our communities. We all see that. It does affect policing and all the other services, and community safety in our communities.

There's a lot to talk about in that bill. I touched lightly on what the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke began with.

Mr. Speaker, thank you. I'm sure I'll talk again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to add to the debate again today. The longer we go in this debate, I think it's a good thing. We haven't seen a debate being extended for a while on the part of the government; they tend to truncate debate. But the longer we go, the clearer we get as to what the motivation is on behalf of this government—the clearer the perspective we gain on what their actual motivation is.

I heard it just moments ago from the chief government whip, the member from St. Catharines, who said that our municipalities are looking for savings. So this bill is about savings, it's about money. It is about money, or else you wouldn't be attacking collective bargaining rights on behalf of our law enforcement personnel. You went right after their bargaining rights. That's where you go. That's where you look first, whether it's college faculty, whether it's elementary teachers; now it's first responders and law enforcement. You go right after their collective bargaining rights to find and squeeze any penny you can out of it.

1730

This isn't about transformation in police services. This is about you deflecting your ineptitude and your fiscal mismanagement of this province and not funding our communities and policing. You want to save money? Address the crisis of mental health in our communities. You want to save money? Address poverty, homelessness and affordable living. These are the failures this government has clearly articulated in this bill, and it's a play that we've seen time and time again.

I want to thank the member for St. Catharines for finally bringing truth to this debate on the part of his government, because we know now that it is all about money. It's always been about money. For the Liberal government, that's all they're motivated by. Not safer communities—they want to squeeze as much out of our law enforcement personnel as they possibly can.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke for final comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to thank the minister and the members from Nickel Belt, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock and Essex for their comments.

I appreciate the member for Nickel Belt bringing up the mental health issue. I did have a note on that, but I never got to it because of the interjections by the minister. Yes, police spend so much time dealing with mental health issues that they have a hard time dealing with all of the other challenges that they're faced with.

I do want to address the minister's comments because I've heard it before. He likes to challenge the perspective that anybody has, that if you don't see the world through his lenses, then you're not seeing the real world. Well, I live in Renfrew county, and I can tell the minister that I talk to my people all the time. I dare say I talk to a lot more people, real people, every day than you do yourself. I don't pick and choose who I get to speak to. I'm out with my people every day, every weekend. I'm not cloistered in a minister's office with my select group—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member—and I would remind the member to please address your comments through the Chair.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. I've been on this earth for 60 years, and I've met a lot of people in my day. I don't need the minister telling me about my jaded perspective.

The problem with the minister is that he believes that anybody on this side of the House who doesn't see the world the way he sees it just doesn't get it. Well, maybe he needs to get out of Toronto a little more often. Maybe he needs to get to the valley and see how the real people live and stop trying to tell everybody else just how self-righteous one person can be.

That's your problem. You think you've got it all right and everybody's got it wrong. Well, you're the one who has a lot to learn.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now that everyone has had a chance to have a breath, we will continue with further debate.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I understand that my time has now gone from 20 minutes to 10, unfortunately. I'm going to speak for a few minutes about Bill 175, the Safer Ontario Act, but I'm going to start with a good story.

Niagara police officers earn medals of bravery. This month, four of our Niagara regional police officers received medals of bravery from the Governor General. Under fire, these four officers attempted to help an armed, suicidal man with mental health issues. Upon arriving, these officers evacuated the residents on the floor of the apartment building where the man was reported to have several firearms. One officer spoke to the man through the door to de-escalate the situation and managed to talk the man into leaving the apartment with his hands up, appearing to surrender.

As he stepped towards the officers, he opened fire and shot nine shots at the officers. One officer was shot. Their training kicked in. These officers were able to

protect the community and resolve the situation. Despite exchanging fire, everyone survived this tense situation.

The injured officer discussed the psychological aspect of having a near-death experience. It is difficult when there isn't much peer support, as very few people have the types of situations that these officers have gone through. The officer stated that healing from the types of situations that police face all the time is an ongoing process.

We heard from the member from Trinity-Spadina in his two-minute comment about how we don't really need to send out police officers to all these mental health calls because they're not all a crisis situation. Well, I say you don't know if there's a crisis situation until you are in it. This was a person with mental health issues who had a weapon and actually shot a police officer.

I just wanted to acknowledge Neal Ridley and Jake Braun, both of Fenwick; and Daniel Bassi and Allan Rivet, both of Welland. They had medals of bravery pinned on their uniforms in Ottawa just a week ago by Governor General Julie Payette. Neal Ridley says, "We all have a bond.... There is no one else I would have wanted to be with in this circumstance. If I didn't have Dan, Allan and Jake there, I would not be telling this story.

"We survived with a combination of training, planning, trust and luck." He said he's still coming to terms with what happened. "I don't go to work for a medal, I go to work because I love to serve people and defend those who can't defend themselves."

You can almost relate this privatization piece in this bill to what happened to health care over the years, where the health care system has actually been eroded. Ontario is the province with the least amount of registered nurses per patient across the entire country. We've moved health care out into the community with more than a thousand privatized agencies, and have not dealt with the mental health crises as well that are in our communities, as we closed mental health hospitals in this province under the Mike Harris government back in the 1990s. That money wasn't moved to mental health in the community under the Tories or under the Liberals, unfortunately. Both have a mental health plan investing some dollars—\$1.2 billion over 10 years and I think the same from the PCs—but it's like a drop in the bucket when you have not addressed the mental health issues of people in this province for 20 years.

I want to focus in on the labour piece of this bill, because the police officers—and I meet with my chief of police from time to time. I certainly meet with the Niagara Region Police Association from time to time to have discussions. I'm concerned about two things, and I think they're concerned about two things as well. Yes, they want to be accountable, and we know that in every profession there are a few bad eggs. It doesn't matter what profession it is, it doesn't matter what workplace you are in; there are people who find themselves in trouble, perhaps breaking the law. It doesn't matter where it is. We have people who are scamming OW or

ODSP—a very small percentage. We have nurses who are committing infractions. So it isn't limited to the police.

When I sat as a regional councillor and we were dealing with police budgets, we were always hearing about this vast number of police officers who were suspended with pay, some of them as long as six or seven years as they were going through their criminal proceedings and their own oversight proceedings. But it is not as widespread as—I mean, yes, it gets a lot of media hype because they are police officers, right? When they find themselves in trouble on the job or off the job, we all hear about it, where we wouldn't necessarily hear about that in other workplaces.

When the police were here for their lobby day, I asked them, "How many of those people under the OPA are in the system right now?" They said, "Six or seven." Should they be suspended without pay? If it's a serious offence, absolutely that should happen. But they should have the same rights as every other unionized worker in this process. I understand that under this bill, we're setting up a new tribunal process to deal with the discipline of police officers. Every other unionized worker in this province goes to a well-respected, well-tested neutral arbitration system, where we have arbitrators who deal with suspensions and disciplines and terminations and all kinds of infractions, and have been for the last 40 years. That is actually what the police officers are looking for, what the police association is looking for: They're looking to be treated in the same way, with their disciplines, as every other unionized worker in the province.

1740

I'm concerned that the Liberal government hasn't learned their lesson. We had Bill 115, which was the Liberal government imposing contracts on teachers. That was overturned in court, and it actually cost the taxpayers of this province \$50 million to address that charter right issue. Then we had Bill 178, the colleges collective agreement negotiations. We're hearing, just recently, that OPSEU is about to do a charter challenge on the infringements of workers' rights to strike.

Then we have the issue of the Human Rights Code that I think arises out of Bill 175, because in the bill we talk about giving police chiefs and police services the ability to downgrade people if they're injured or if they have PTSD, that there's an opening or an opportunity there. In fact, they even go as far as to say that they can terminate a person if they don't have a job for them. I can tell you, from the Human Rights Code, that employers in fact have a duty to accommodate people, whether it is a mental health issue, whether it is a permanent physical injury issue, and they have to do that up to undue hardship. Under the Human Rights Code, undue hardship is if you would go bankrupt as a business, then you've met your obligation of undue hardship. Police services are never going to go bankrupt. In fact, it's the taxpayers who pay the bill. I think the government needs to turn its mind to that piece of whether or not they're going too far in this bill with respect to the Human Rights Code.

Then, on the issue of privatization, I'm concerned that we want to privatize policing services using public tax dollars to pay profits to companies to do some unspecified kinds of work. We don't even know what that is at this point. We're talking about forensic labs, but we had that whole issue even in the public system at SickKids, where we wrongfully imprisoned a number of people over the deaths of children.

Canine search. The civilian part of policing is currently part of the association. Special constables, but we don't even know what those special constables are going to be doing. So this is kind of like the blind leading the blind here because we've got this big 400-page bill, but we don't know what any of the regulations are going to be. We don't know how this is going to impact policing.

I'm hoping that when we get to committee, we'll have a lot of opportunity to put forward some amendments. I'm not sure that the Liberals will entertain many of our amendments; they generally don't do that. But I think we need to have more than one day of hearings. Perhaps we even need to travel this bill because, in fact, policing is different in smaller communities as opposed to larger communities, and maybe we need to, as members of this Legislature, hear about its impact.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to follow the member opposite to give my two minutes' remarks with regard to Bill 175. I want to take this time to focus specifically on the Ontario Special Investigations Unit, more specifically dealing with the whole issue of systemic racism and discrimination, because we have heard about this issue during the consultation. I heard about it when I held my round table in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, and the fact that the community has asked us for more policing oversight, particularly in the area of racism and the inherent concerns about discrimination.

The proposed legislation, if passed, directs the Ontario Special Investigations Unit to provide training for all employees at the organization to focus on recognizing and respecting diversity and the multicultural society that we all live in in this province.

The changes proposed in the legislation also address not just the black community, but our First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities. At the end of the day, we know living in diversity, like my riding in Scarborough in the city of Toronto, there are different forms of racism and different forms of discrimination.

With regard to the oversight investigative powers, we're also improving the investigative powers of the formal oversight body. We're also looking at proposed legislation mandating a police officer has a duty to comply with the law when it comes to investigations.

It would also require all policing oversight in terms of investigations to be completed by the Office of the Independent Police Review Director. We heard about these concerns; we're now putting them in the proposed legislation.

I'm looking forward to more debate and more discussion about this oversight piece because it is good for the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to provide comment for the member from Welland on Bill 175, the Safer Ontario Act. She brought up a great number of points on, as I said, a very big bill.

What was mentioned was Justice Tulloch's report that came forward. It is part of this Bill 175 about a police oversight and complaints system, based on his recommendations.

I don't think we disagree with this. What the police have said is that the recommendations are there and you want to put them in place. The problem is, they haven't said any dollars that go with that announcement for additional resources. It's a very large overhaul of the complaints system, but where are the dollars for them to be able to do that? They certainly don't want dollars taken away from their front-line services they provide in all our communities for another bureaucracy that isn't funded and should be funded; nobody is saying anything about the more oversight that's needed.

It also gives unprecedented ministerial power for a government. A minister can actually make a recommendation of a judgment on police officers. I think the government really needs to look at that. That's way too much power in a minister's office. It changes a lot of the oversight from the OCPC, the OIPRD and the OPRD, and now it adds this fourth layer of oversight, the Inspector General of Policing, on top of that. Where are the resources to make these changes? Ministerial oversight is, we think, way too much power in the minister's office.

The member from Welland certainly brought in questions about the outsourcing. Where are the definitions and what's going to actually occur when people call 911? They want to make sure they have a qualified police officer who responds.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is a pleasure to rise on the debate on Bill 175, the Safer Ontario Act, and to respond to the comments from my colleague the member for Welland.

The member concluded her remarks with a recommendation that this is the kind of bill that should travel the province when it goes to public input. She noted the differences in policing in communities across Ontario. I just wanted to comment briefly on my community in London.

Certainly, we were one of the urban centres where issues around carding were identified. We had much, much higher numbers of black youth and indigenous people who were carded than their representation in our population. Ensuring that police services boards and policing are responsive to the demographics of a community has been a big concern for us in London. That's

why, when the London Police Services Board was approved to appoint two new members, they requested to the minister that one of the members, one of these new police service board members, be indigenous—because they felt very strongly that it is important to have indigenous representation on police services boards, given the legacy of systemic racism, colonialism and residential schools, and the distrust that has arisen of police, quite rightly, within indigenous communities. Representation is a critical piece, and I look forward to hearing what groups have to say when the bill goes to input.

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. James J. Bradley: I want to compliment the member on what I thought was very balanced representation of her own position and that of her political party on this issue. She did not go down the road of her colleague from Essex, who misinterpreted—I'll use that, because I think any other word is not allowed in the House—my position.

What I was making reference to was going to AMO and watching all the Tories fawn around the Tory mayors who are demanding certain things, and then when they get to the Legislature, they say something different than what they told the Tory mayors.

Mr. Jim Wilson: No, no, Jim. You know that's not true.

Mr. James J. Bradley: I know my good friend from Simcoe would understand that very, very well.

I know the member did not get a chance and would have liked to have elaborated on circumstances related to the Niagara regional police services board and some of the activities there. Perhaps on another occasion she will have that opportunity, because she has publicly expressed concerns about things that have happened: the departing chief of police and other circumstances which have confronted the board, which sometimes militate in favour of legislation of this kind. I'll look forward to that on another occasion.

I've got to say to her that members of the opposition—because I have been there longer than I was in government—tend to want fewer regulations and more contained in legislation. Then, when they get on the government side, it changes sides on that.

It's like back-to-work legislation: When you're on the one side, you take one position; on the other side, it's more difficult. I know the teachers in Lambton county in 1993 who had—the back-to-work legislation passed by the NDP government on that occasion. I know the government didn't want to do it, but was forced to by the circumstances that were there.

I want to compliment the member. I thought she delivered an excellent speech. I wish it were the full 20 minutes; unfortunately, it changed to 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Welland for final comments.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I just want to be clear. I want to get on the record that the NDP caucus clearly supports

police reform under the review, under the Police Services Act. We fully support First Nations governing their own police services, but we also support the resources that police are actually going to need, and that municipalities are going to need, as all of this transformation actually occurs with separate tribunals and special tribunals—except for where we have highlighted the areas where we have concerns.

In my last one minute and 18 seconds: You've often heard me talk about the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority. Some of the same motley crew that were on the board of the NPCA also sit on the board of the Niagara Regional Police Service. Our chief of police resigned recently, but of course, he was way too professional to say that it had anything to do with some of the people sitting on the police services board, which I think is the case.

I have told you in the past that there were lawsuits of private citizens and of regional councillors, and I just

want to report to you for the record that on Thursday, November 23, in a sharply worded decision critical of the NPCA which defends the vital importance of free speech, the Superior Court of Justice dismissed the defamation suit filed against Ed Smith, a retired military fellow who had been critical of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority. They also dismissed a suit against a private company who were suing Ed Smith as well, for \$3.5 million. They went on to say that "There are many places in the world where I might expect such a thing to happen, but not in our beloved Dominion." This was a great victory for Ed Smith and for everyone who may be impacted by SLAPP suits like this. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at nine o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor-Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	
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